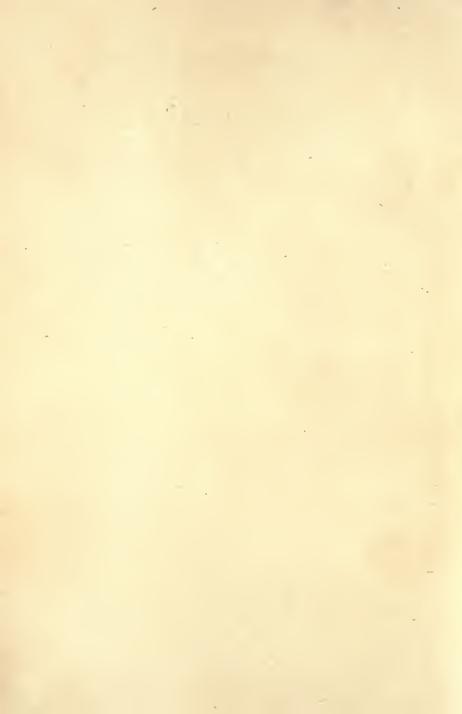


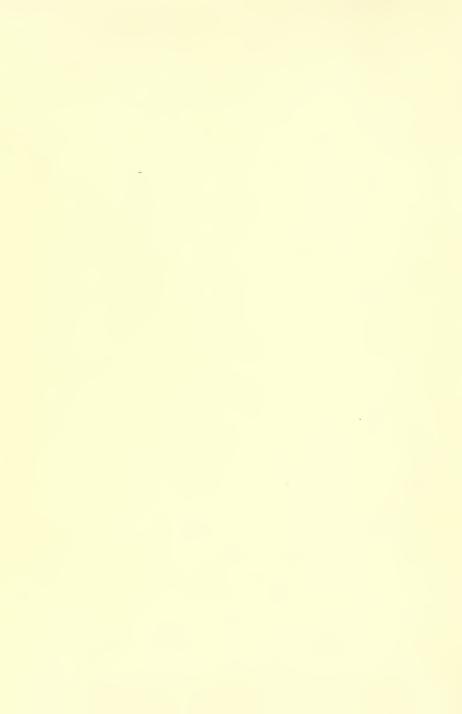
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On the Rock of Quebec "Ah, Anne, with faith like yours, kingdoms could indeed be won!" [p. 86]

The Romance of the Sieur de La Salle and His Discovery of the Mississippi River

WILLIAM DANA ORCUTT

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLOTTE WEBER



SECOND EDITION

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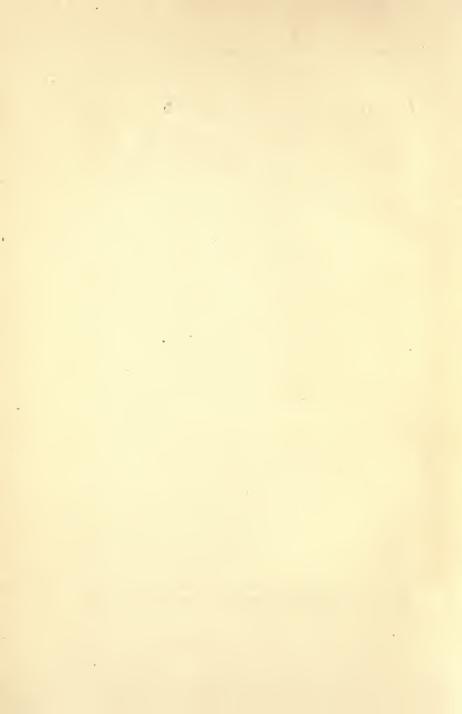
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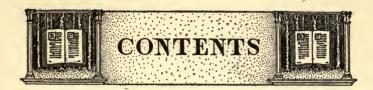
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To my Wife
Louie Thompson Orcutt
In Token of Comradeship





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ILLUSTRATIONS



On the Rock of Quebec. Frontispiece
"Ah, Anne, with faith like yours, kingdoms could indeed be
won!" [p. 86]

IN THE HOUSE OF THE NOVICES. Facing page 14
"I will wrench myself free in spite of all, just so sure as God
lives and is my witness."

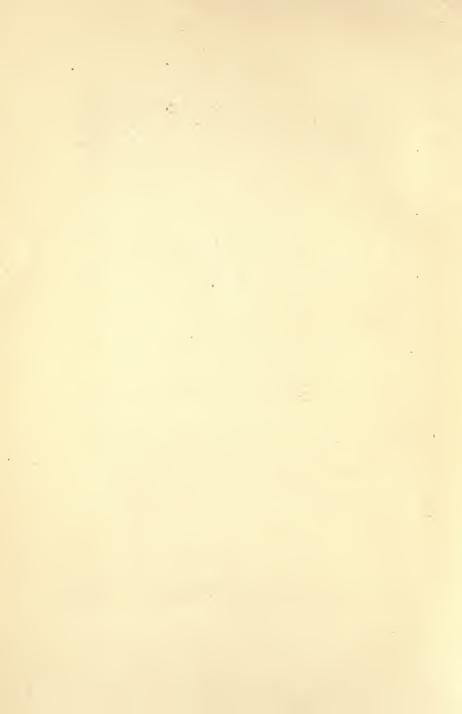
Anne Interrupts the Conference. Facing page 66 "The hood of her cape had fallen back, permitting the wealth of chestnut hair, in its disarranged beauty, to form a frame to the fair face beneath."

The Fête at Versailles. Facing page 166
"The King and the Queen led the assemblage down the broad walk to the edge of the grand canal."

Louis XIV. and Mme. de Maintenon. Facing page 186 "They call the popes 'Your Holiness,' and kings 'Your Majesty.' You, Madame, should be called 'Your Solidity.'"

THE DISCOVERY OF THE MISSISSIPPI. Facing page 262
"In the name of Louis the Great, I do now take possession of this great river of the Mississippi."

*** Cover Design and Chapter Decorations by Frederick Garrison Hall.







HEN SO HIGH AN authority as Sir Robert Walpole exclaims: "Anything but history, for history must be false," the modern author surely has the privilege of accepting what he chooses

and of discarding that portion which fits not into the weaving of his plot; yet so much remains to us of authentic knowledge concerning the life and labours of Robert Cavelier de La Salle that there is little temptation to depart from the most reliable authorities.

Henri de Tonty gives us a vivid account of the expedition in which he himself took a prominent part; and Nicolas de La Salle, "little Nicolas," as he is known in history, contributes a narrative which, while less interesting, is perhaps no less reliable. Parkman has gathered together the testimony of the various witnesses for and against La Salle's

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honours in such a manner as to leave little for later chroniclers to add, and to him is due an acknowledgment of gratitude from all students in the fascinating field which he has so admirably covered.

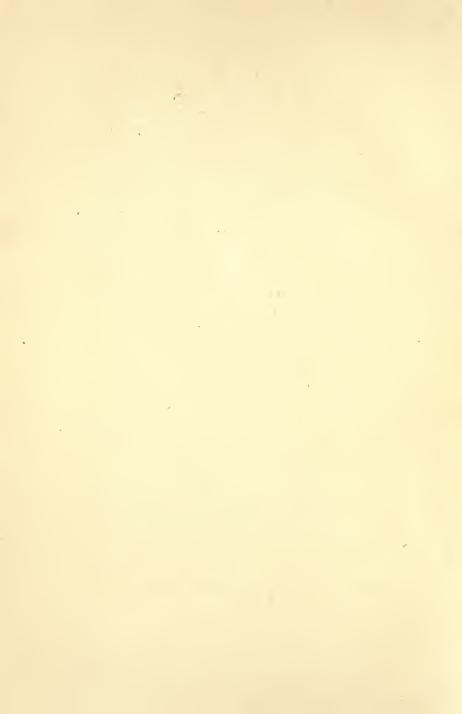
No one, however, can read what these and others have written of La Salle without becoming conscious that throughout his exciting and adventurous career ran a thread of romance, intensified by the persecution of the Jesuits and the treachery of his brother, Father Jean Cavelier. In this story the author has endeavoured to pick this thread apart from the others which make up the warp and the woof of his life, adhering closely to the historical facts in such portions of the hero's adventures as have been retained, but throwing the light more strongly upon the characteristics which raised him above the aspirations of a mere adventurer.

The relations of Louis XIV. to New France form an important part in the history of his remarkable reign, and the influence which Madame de Maintenon wielded over the "Sun King" changed the destinies of the world. In the present narrative the author has considered this wonderful woman as the tool of the Jesuits in the accomplishment of their defined purpose, but absolutely conscien-

FOREWORD

tious in what she believed to be her Divine mission.

The picture of Versailles and its life and that of the women of the French Court is drawn largely from the fascinating contributions of Saint-Simon and Saint-Armand upon these subjects, and to them the author acknowledges his obligation.









HE TAPERS HAD LONG been snuffed out in the House of the Novices in Paris, and the professed and the novice alike had thrown their erring bodies upon the hard floors of the cells for their much-

needed rest, save those who had penance to perform or lost sanctity to regain.

Yet not all, for in one cell, where the novice was supposed to be thankfully accepting his opportunity to relax himself from the everlasting vigils, the grey light of morning, just creeping in through the small barred window, betrayed the occupant rapidly pacing up and down the narrow compass. His tall, strong figure, even through the novitiate gown, showed him to be a man well built and vigorous, and his face displayed determination and the ambition of youth. His hands were clenched tightly together until the nails almost brought the blood, and upon his forehead stood great

beads of perspiration, though the cell was bitter cold. Back and forth he strode, now with his arms behind him, now waving them wildly in the air, until the breaking dawn warned him of

the elapsing time.

Suddenly he stopped, and resting his shoulders against the cold stones looked abstractedly out of the window. He felt the cool air upon his face, and it seemed to calm the passion which controlled him. He pressed his forehead with both his hands, and then seated himself upon the edge of a rude stool, the only furniture the cell contained. He remained sitting for a moment as if in meditation, and then the pent-up fury burst forth again.

"I cannot, and I will not," he cried. "To live a lie like this is worse than death. Why should I surrender my liberty, renounce my ambition, and relinquish my will? And for what? To be a novice, a scholastic, a co-

adjutor, or even a professed!

"Fool that I was!" he went on. "Or even a professed! I cannot and I will not! I believed that smooth-tongued tutor when he told me that here all the soul's thirsts and cravings would be satisfied more fully than in the carnal world; that here the spiritual ambitions would so far replace the temporal that thought of all outside these four grey walls would be

forgotten. And what do I find? That those who enter here become human automatons, to be adjusted by the priests with minute exactness to the execution of a secret and a terrible work, whose nature they are forbidden even to surmise. That they who were men before, with intellect, soul, reason, and will, become so paralysed by this awful influence, so broken by this mysterious and relentless obedience, that the bodies alone retain human semblance. And into these degraded shells is infused the 'spirit of the Order,' so that mechanically they shall perform whatever task is imposed upon them, ignorant of its purpose, powerless to escape."

With a final sob which convulsed his powerful frame, the novice threw himself upon the floor of his cell, and waited for the hour of the confessional. No sleep visited those roving eyes, but power and self-control came with repose. When he rose, all signs of the conflict had passed, and nothing remained in his face save a determination which was too pronounced to be mistaken.

In spite of the opposition of the Huguenots and the Jansenists, in spite of the persecution of the government, and in spite of the brilliant but merciless raillery of Pascal, the Society of

Jesus, composed of the followers of Loyola, had gained a foothold in France, and had established its House of the Novices in Paris. Opposition seemed to be the food upon which the new-born prodigy thrived best, and the middle of the seventeenth century found it, though yet in swaddling clothes, full of strength and tenacity. The opportunity offered to its votaries to become early martyrs proved irresistible to the enthusiastic casuists, who embraced its tenets with a steadfastness and a devotion which brightened in the glare of the stake and the agonies of the torture-chamber.

By 1666 the antagonism of the government to the sect was reduced to a forfeiture of inheritance, and the House of the Novices at Paris had received into its faith many of the sons of wealthy and prominent families, who sought refuge from the world's turmoil and sin. The Jesuits had not scattered themselves throughout the country in the capacity of tutors for naught, and the seeds so carefully planted between the leaves of the instruction books were beginning to bear fruit. The enthusiasm of the younger devotees exceeded, if possible, that of their elders, and the fathers offered the marvelous zeal displayed by the novices as further evidence of the divine sanction to their labours.

The novice descended to the chapel, as the matin bell struck, and ranged himself with the others behind the scholastics. He seemed unconscious of those around him, and was impatient for the services to conclude. As the solemn procession passed out from the chapel, he fell behind, and, bowing his head upon his breast, astonished the Father Superior by barring the exit.

"What means this interruption?" said the priest, sternly. "Have you a sin too grievous for the public confessional that you seek me

thus abruptly?"

"A sin, yet not a sin, my father," proudly responded the novice. "A sin if I stay on here, — a living lie, when all my hopes and thoughts are far beyond; and not a sin that I confess it now, and ask to be absolved of all my vows, that I may go out once more into that world which is my world, and into that life which is my life."

The father was silent for a moment. Even in the dim light of the chapel the novice could see the convulsive twitching of his features, as he struggled to hold back the storm which the younger man knew was about to break.

"What madness is this, my son?" the old man finally said. "What evil spirit has possessed you that you dare to suggest breaking

your sacred vows, and to address your Father

Superior with such disrespect?"

"This is no madness, father," replied the novice, firmly. "My vows have surely lost their sanctity long since, or my will would not call so loudly for release; nor do my words contain lack of respect to you other than the fact of my determination."

The father realised that here was a spirit which perhaps might be moulded, but never broken. His voice assumed a kindlier tone.

"My son, have you so soon forgotten the example which the life of the saintly Loyola has given us? Do you not remember that he, like you, was proud and worldly, until God, in His infinite mercy, caused him to be wounded in the breach of Pampeluna? Have you forgotten the weeks of physical and mental suffering which followed, until, in the cave of Mauresa, the mysteries of Heaven were revealed to him? Think of the joy with which he passed from the agonies of death to the transports of life, in which he devoted himself to his new calling. He was still a soldier, my son, but the battle he waged was for souls, and not for blood. In founding this society of ours, think you that Loyola sought merely to create a company of monks who should aspire to reach Heaven through penance, prayer, and medita-

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tion? Nay, rather to organise a powerful army of might and zeal to subdue the world to the dominion of those truths which had been revealed to him. Is this the inactive, monotonous existence which causes you to long for the old life, without purpose, and filled with

pitfalls?"

"Ah, my father, how plausible it sounds as you speak it!" replied the novice; "it was thus that my old tutor talked when he persuaded me to give up my freedom. But he, and you too, veil right skilfully the most important part of all your tenets. You do not tell me, in reciting the story of Loyola, that his dying words were of such terrible import, - 'Let each member of the Order be in the hands of his superiors but as a corpse.' I did not know this until recently; I did not realise how definite was the attempt to destroy my individuality. You have sought to stimulate in me, a novice, all those energies which would make me a powerful instrument in the great purpose of your Order, yet you would rob me of volition. You have endeavoured to excite my enthusiasm to its intensest pitch only that you might command me, in the name of religion, to yield absolutely my intellect and will in slavish abnegation to you, the Father Superior, whom I must recognise as God's representative on earth."

"Nay, nay, my son," interrupted the Superior, hastily; "this sacrifice of intellect and will is not to me, but to your Maker, — and the more complete the resignation the more glorifying to the individual."

"A mere differing in the words, as you well know, father," replied the novice. "You will find no difficulty in forcing the wills of the other novices, who have come to you at an earlier age than I, to be subservient to yours, but at twenty-three years of age one's reason is not so easily overthrown. When I was persuaded to enter here I came with no little enthusiasm, thanks to the zealousness of the tutor whom my brother placed over me. I was ready to accept the life for which I was in part prepared; but as I began to be conscious vaguely, rather than to realise, that every noble thought, every tie of affection, every generous impulse, must be strangled by this crushing submission and obedience. I felt such a chill come over my heart that for a time I became inert and passive, just as you expected me to be. But then followed a self-examination which brought me to a full realisation of the hideous truth. It was death, a living death, for which I was preparing myself, instead of the life spiritual which had been drawn for me in such attractive form. The bandage has fallen from my eyes,

father: the surroundings have become hateful to me, and I ask you to release me from my vows."

The face of the Father Superior betrayed more clearly than he would have wished the importance he attached to this interview. Robert Cavelier came from such a prominent family, and his conversion had been considered so excellent an example to sons of other important families, that to have him, sever his connection with the Company with such clear ideas of the principles of the Order, would be a serious misfortune.

"I have listened patiently to your childish conclusions, my son," said the priest at length, "because I wished to learn how far you had wandered from the truth. Nothing could be more unfair than for you to leave us with such erroneous conceptions of our purpose. And have you forgotten that before taking your present vows, you were given full opportunity to depart if you so elected? Then was the time to leave us, my son, for our Order refuses to accept any save those who come freely to its protecting arms. Then was the time, — not now, when the day approaches which shall make of you a worthy instrument in the hands of the Lord."

"It is even as you say, father," replied Rob-

ert, bitterly; "I accepted the long term of solitude and trials cheerfully, believing it to be my duty. At the end of this period, knowing me to be utterly exhausted both in mind and body, you told me that I was free to rise and go forth from my cell if I desired. Full well you knew that my only desire at that moment was that merciful death might free me from my sufferings. It was well timed, father, but the cleverness of it did not escape me. When my strength returned, and I realised that the moment had passed forever, I hated you and the Order the more. It is useless for us to argue. You yourself have taught me that power is at the centre and not at the circumference, and it is at the centre that I mean to be."

The voice of the Father Superior trembled with anger and apprehension as he spoke.

"Then you demand of me a release from those vows which bind you to our Order?"

"I do."

"You are willing yourself to break those solemn covenants which you have made with your Creator?"

"I am willing to break such covenants as I have made with you under misapprehension, thinking them to be with my Creator."

"Do you understand fully that while the Order may release you, you are quite powerless

to release yourself?" asked the priest, ignoring the distinction Robert had made.

"I understand that I have already released myself, father, by the position which I have taken. I appreciate the importance of an oath, and that is why I come to you and ask my freedom; but should you refuse to grant my request, it would make no difference. No power on earth can keep me here, and it is useless to

attempt it."

"Listen, my son," said the priest, thoroughly exasperated; "if you were to leave this house without my permission you would leave it as a renegade brother of our Order, and with our curse upon your head. Vows taken with us, my son, are not so lightly cast aside. And if you do go from here, whither would you turn? From your family inheritance the State has already barred you since you entered our doors. Without this, what could you hope to do? And no matter where you might go, or whither you might turn, you would find us there against you. Before you try this hazardous experiment, my son, it will be well for you to consider the matter carefully; and in order that the other novices may not be contaminated, I shall place you in solitary confinement, at least until your brother Jean may be summoned. Perhaps he may bring you to your senses."

"It is indeed fitting that my brother should be present at the final act of the tragedy which he himself has forced upon me," replied Robert, bitterly. "Place me in solitary confinement if you will,—I admit your power; but understand well that not even you, nor Jean, nor stronger walls than these of this prison-house, can keep me long. I will wrench myself free in spite of all, just so sure as God lives and is my witness!"

"Take not the sacred name of God in your useless boastings," commanded the priest, sternly. "Remove those vestments of the Church, which in your present mood you but defile. Prepare yourself for the punishment which you have so richly merited, and remain in solitary confinement until your brother can be summoned."

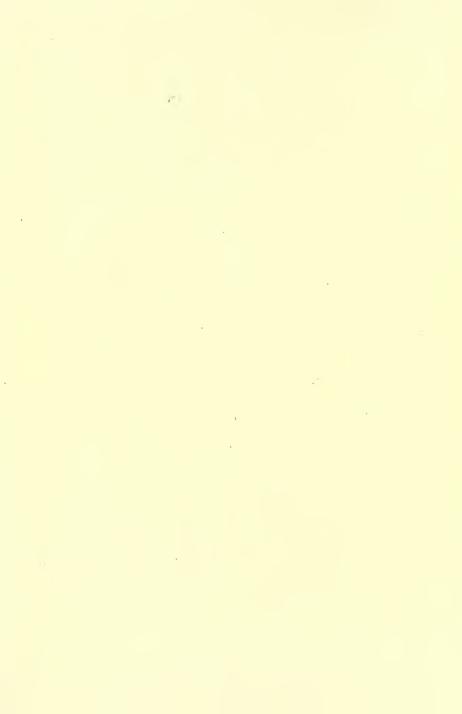
Robert hastened to comply, and quickly tore off the black cassock which enveloped his body, throwing it, with his beads, to the chapel floor. In the mean time the Father Superior summoned Father Anselm, and for a moment before breaking the silence the two regarded the angry figure facing them.

"Father Anselm," said the Father Superior, severely, "into your keeping I give this rebellious novice, who has suddenly become bereft of all sober sense. I will instruct you further

concerning him at a later hour."



In the House of the Novices
"I will wrench myself free in spite of all, just so sure as
God lives and is my witness."



CHALLENGES THE JESUITS

Father Anselm bowed, and motioned to Robert that he was to precede him.

"I accept your present authority," said the novice, as he moved to obey the priest's gesture; "but the struggle is only just begun. You fight to enslave my soul and I to free it. To-day you are the master, — we shall see what the future will bring forth."

"I do not think that you will easily leave us, my son," replied the Superior, grimly; "but even so, know well that wherever you may go, be it to the uttermost parts of the earth, this Order will search you out to your destruction. Remember, you yourself have thrown the gage to earth: no man can challenge the mighty Society of Jesus and live!"

The disgraced novice made no reply. Slowly he passed out of the chapel and mounted the narrow steps which his guide indicated.

CHAPTER II THE NOVICE BECOMES A PRIEST WITHOUTA CHANGE OF HEART



I REQUIRED SOME little time for Robert to realise his new conditions. The cell into which he had been thrust was no smaller, perhaps, than the one to which he had been accustomed dur-

ing his sojourn in the House of the Novices; but the sudden change from the light of day to the darkness of night, together with the excitement through which he had just passed, produced a lethargy which he found difficult to throw off. The heavy iron door closed behind him, and the great key turned noisily in the lock; the bar clanged as it fell into place,—but still he stood motionless in the centre of the cell.

Gradually his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, and the outlines of the cell slowly shaped themselves. Strangely enough, the first sensation Robert experienced as his senses gradually regained their strength was that of curi-

WITHOUT A CHANGE OF HEART

osity. The novices had all heard of the horrors of this place of solitary confinement, but his was the first offence during the two years gone by which had been so flagrant as to require its dismal services. The hazy outlines at length became more definite, and Robert could distinguish the four solid stone walls, unbroken by even a barred window. The ceiling of the cell was also of stone, narrow apertures admitting a scanty supply of air but no light. The floor was stone and supported no furniture of any kind.

The prisoner moved for the first time, groping to find even a handful of straw for his bed, but his search was unavailing. This movement, however, brought him to himself. He straightened up to his full height; and could one have seen him standing thus in the darkness, he might well have wondered at the expression upon his face. The angry lines had given way, the emotion which had controlled him had become calm, and in spite of the extremity in which he now found himself, he was possessed of a satisfaction which was noticeably evident. The storm is ever terrible while its pent-up strength increases, little by little, to the point when it must break its bounds: the moment of the breaking is fierce and uncontrollable, but the calm which follows is the more impressive

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because of its contrast. Robert had at last freed his mind from the burden which had made him so wretched, and even though his physical self was in restraint, his mental strength, Antæuslike, had gained from his seeming defeat.

"At last I am my own master!" he cried exultantly, as if forgetful of the walls which confined him; "at last I am a man and not a hypocrite! A prisoner truly, but this cannot endure forever; and the father knows full well that naught can force me back into the old life."

Robert stretched out his arms almost imploringly as the reaction came upon him in its full force. "A man! a man! a man!" he cried incoherently, "at last a man!" His strength failed, and he sank upon the stone floor, resting his head upon his hands. Little by little he went over in his mind the events of the past few years, which seemed like a nightmare to him. He dimly remembered his mother and her devotion to him while she lived. He remembered the change which came over the home when she went out of it. His father, always reserved, had become even more self-absorbed after his wife's death, and had given over the two boys so wholly to the charge of their tutor that they almost forgot his existence. Jean, ten years Robert's senior, eagerly assimilated the Jesuitical

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WITHOUT A CHANGE OF HEART

teachings of the clever instructor, and left home while his brother was still a child to pass through the training necessary to become a priest. old-time pain came back to Robert's heart as he thought of the cruel neglect which both father and brother had bestowed upon him since that time. Jean had always possessed that supremacy over Robert which so often exists where several years separate two brothers. When he commanded the younger boy, therefore, absolutely to obey the urgings of his tutor, and the father had remained indifferent, it was not strange that Robert's somewhat visionary nature should have been convinced that his only salvation lay in following in his brother's footsteps. As it was in doing this that so much suffering had come to him, Robert naturally attributed a large portion of the blame to Jean; and the prospect of again seeing him, and under the present conditions, was most distasteful.

From the past his thoughts overtook the present and ran on to the future. He found himself wondering what he should find the world like after having been apart from it for so long a time. Still musing upon this uncertainty, his tired nerves relaxed, and sleep came to relieve the heavy tension. How long he slept Robert could not estimate, as day and night were now the same. The noise of the great key being

thrust into the lock awoke him with a start, and it was a moment before he could collect his thoughts sufficiently to comprehend the situation. During that moment the heavy door swung open, and Robert recognised the forms of two priests in the dim light. Father Anselm deposited upon the floor the meagre supper intended for the prisoner and then withdrew; but the Father Superior remained behind, his eye wandering about in the darkness to locate the disgraced novice.

"Have you aught to say to me," he asked, "now that you have had several hours in which to meditate upon the effrontery of this morning? I have been wondering at the imagination which could have carried you into such depths of error."

"How far was I from the truth, father?" replied Robert, boldly.

"You still insist upon insulting our Order, my son. May I not ask you upon what information you base your most unhappy conclusions?"

Robert hesitated for a moment, but his mind was quickly made up. He spoke with terrifying directness to the older man before him.

"You have come to worm out of me the name of him who confirmed the convictions which had become all but certainties in my heart. Do not deny it, — that is the real ques-

WITHOUT A CHANGE OF HEART

tion which you wish to ask. But contrary to your expectation, I will answer it, since it cannot harm him now, and it will prove to you that it is hopeless to endeavour to draw me back. Now listen well. You have not forgotten Father Le Fèvre, who died two months ago? His was the only true and noble soul I have known since entering this accursed place. He had been induced to come here by the same false hopes which were later held out to me, but he did not awake to the terrible purpose of the Order until too late. Step by step he was drawn into the net until you all supposed that the manhood had been crushed out of him, and that he was entirely subservient to the work assigned to him. You gave him the truths a little too soon, father; had you but waited another month, he would perhaps have been in such helpless condition that the full realisation of their purport would not have come to him."

"Did Father Le Fèvre tell you this?" asked

the Superior, sternly.

"From consternation, his feelings turned to mortal regret, which finally killed him," continued Robert, not heeding the interruption; "but before he died we had several conversations together. He had evidently seen in me those signs of discontent which had escaped my other instructors, and to me he disclosed the princi-

ples of this Company as they had been given to him, which but confirmed the convictions I had already formed. From the hour of his death I have had but one hope, but one desire, — and that I expressed to you this morning. Father Le Fèvre did what he could to undo the error of his life, and he will be rewarded for it."

"He will be everlastingly damned as a traitor," almost shouted the Superior, in his wrath. "It is now my turn to speak, my son. I had hoped to find that the statements which you made this morning were but the result of hallucination, and that we could show you the error of your way. Now, however, the matter has become of serious moment. What you have just told me makes it absolutely dangerous for us to allow you to depart, and your own words have pronounced your sentence. Out of respect to your brother, who is a true son of Loyola, I shall await his arrival before making my final decision; but so long as that spirit of yours remains untamed, so long as I see in you an enemy to our cause, you will remain here in this cell. I advise you, my son, to pray God to give you a softer and a more receptive heart."

The old man abruptly took his departure, and Robert was again left alone with his reflections. It was evident that he had made a seri-

WITHOUT A CHANGE OF HEART

ous mistake in telling the Superior of Father Le Fèvre, but it had at least resulted in showing him that his offence was considered more than a breach of discipline; it was a matter which affected the well-being of the Order itself. He realised fully now that he could regain his liberty only by escape, and in spite of watchful supervision; and Robert spent hour after hour endeavouring to devise some means to accomplish it.

The hours came and went, marked only by the two daily calls made by Robert's jailer. The novice had not abandoned hope, yet thus far no plan for escape suggested itself which gave any promise of success. On the seventh day the prisoner was surprised to hear the noise of the unfastening of the door at an earlier hour than he had become accustomed to look for it. He had forgotten Jean in thinking of other matters, and the interview which he had dreaded was upon him before he realised it.

The young priest entered the cell with deliberate step, pushing to the heavy door behind him. He held a candle above his head, and quietly advanced to his brother's side. Even in the flickering light, the resemblance between the two men was striking. The priest was of the same height, but thinner; the years of ecclesiastical associations had made their im-

press upon his face; the expression was less frank and fearless than his brother's, but the eyes, the nose, the mouth, the general bearing, were the same.

It seemed an eternity to Robert before Jean broke the silence; but it was an old trick of the elder brother to intimidate the younger with his eyes. Robert remembered it well. But this time his countenance did not flinch beneath the piercing glance, and Jean was evidently ill pleased by his brother's self-possession. At length the priest spoke.

"I have no greeting for you, unhappy boy, as you are but receiving well-merited punishment. Long years have I borne with you, but now, when my hope of seeing you clad in the garments of the Church is almost realised, I am summoned to witness your degradation and my own humiliation. Have you no manhood left, that you are willing to place this last cross upon me?"

"It is because there is some manhood left that I find myself in this uncomfortable position, brother Jean. Did the Superior tell you the nature of my offence?"

"He did; I understand that you have been

rebellious and insulting."

"Did he not tell you that, beyond all this, I am guilty of having learned too fast, and that I

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am in possession of facts concerning the purpose of this Order which he dare not have known outside this house?"

"So much the worse for you, Robert! He is convinced that no argument will avail to force you to forget the lying tales of that traitorous priest, and you yourself must pay the penalty."

"He is quite right, Jean; I shall never forget nor cease to be grateful for what Father Le Fèvre revealed. But tell me, what must I do to regain my freedom? I am ready to make a trade if he is."

Jean looked keenly at his brother for several moments before replying. Then he threw back his head and laughed derisively.

"It is a waste of time for us to discuss this, Robert. The Superior sent for me, thinking that I should grieve over the misfortune which has befallen my precious brother. On the contrary, I rejoice in it. You yourself have unwittingly played into my hands, and now you are to be removed from my path forever! You ask me what you must do to regain your freedom, and I will answer you with utter frankness, -die, my brother, die! You talk of making a trade; do you suppose for one moment that the Company of Jesus will take any chances of having you tell tales which would bring dis-

credit upon it? Do not be so simple, I pray you! You have seen the light of day for the last time, my brother, and I have now only to bid you an affectionate farewell."

"I do not think so," said Robert, quietly, but taking a quick step to Jean's side and grasping him suddenly by the throat,—"I do not think so! If that is the game we are to play, then I will make the first move!"

Quickly he forced the astonished priest to the floor, choking back the cry which he attempted to utter. Slowly the fingers tightened until the resistance ceased. Robert watched his brother closely, and loosened his grip as soon as it became evident that the priest was unconscious. Then he took from his own back the only garment which covered it, and with his knee still upon his brother's chest, he tore the linen into strips. With one of these he securely bound his prisoner's mouth, and after removing the priest's cassock, he employed the remaining strips in fastening his hands and feet.

By this time Jean had regained consciousness, and his eyes glared at the active figure before him, which was engaged in putting on the black cassock. Thus clothed, Robert took the candle from the floor, and let the light fall full upon his brother's face.

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"Good!" he said, addressing the prostrate priest; "I was afraid that my brotherly caress had perhaps been too affectionate. Look at me now, brother Jean: you shall have your wish gratified. You behold me clad in the garments of the Church! We shall see whether the Superior will recognise the change in his Fathers Cavelier!"

Robert lost no time in leaving the cell, carefully locking the door behind him. At the foot of the steps he extinguished the candle, trusting to the dim light of the chapel to aid him in concealing his identity. As he slowly passed through the chapel, the Father Superior advanced from the sacristy to meet him.

"Are you now convinced, Father Cavelier? Do you agree with me that your brother has become a dangerous enemy to our Order?"

"Entirely so, father," replied Robert, handing him the great key and assuming a saddened demeanour. He watched the Superior closely to note any recognition, but the old man gave him no cause for uneasiness. "During the two years which have elapsed since I have seen him he has completely changed. I could not have believed such treachery possible."

"Do you think that he will likely change in

his behaviour?"

"I do not think so," answered Robert, with greater sincerity in his reply than the Superior knew.

"Then there is but one course to pursue," said the Superior, firmly. "I regret the necessity of this severity to one of your own blood, but the boy knows too much of us to make it safe for him to leave us. I have recited to you how clearly he outlined Loyola's policy when he first addressed me. He evidently made the most of his interviews with Father Le Fèvre."

"I am unable to hear your decision without pain, my father," replied Robert, with wellassumed grief, "but we are taught by noble example that family ties must yield before the necessities of our Order. Years ago you taught me to say, 'I had a father,' and 'I had a brother,' rather than 'I have,' and this training will stand me in good stead now."

"I admire your Christian resignation, my son," answered the old man, warmly; "your loyalty shall not pass by unnoticed. And do you still adhere to your determination to set out for Rouen to-night?"

"I do, father; my duties there will admit of no delay."

"Then farewell, my son; I will not keep you, for the way is long. I thank you for

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coming to me and for your assistance in this sad affair."

Robert bowed reverently, and passed silently out of the door which the Father Superior held open for him.





ARIS WAS IN A STATE of unsettled conditions in 1666. The civil struggles of the Fronde had at last ceased, and Louis XIV., freed from the oppressive influence of Mazarin by the latter's death,

was just beginning to show so unexpectedly that indomitable strength of mind and will which afterwards changed the destinies of the world. Already his admiring and obedient subjects, with all the humility shown to Eastern monarchs, accepted the principle by which his life was ruled,—"L'état, c'est moi"; and by skilfully tempering his tyranny with rare judgment and the prestige of military glory, Louis was enabled to carry out his ambitious schemes.

A part of the King's plan was to reach out across the sea and found a French settlement in the almost mythical New World. A hundred years before, Coligny had sent Villegagnon to establish a colony to check the rival settlements of Spain, and after various vicissitudes, France

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had succeeded in supplanting her once-powerful opponent. Louis entertained great expectations concerning this unknown territory. In it he foresaw a wonderful opportunity not only to extend his territorial limits, but also to replenish his depleted treasury. His policy, therefore, carefully nursed by Colbert, was to favour all projects which tended to strengthen the settlements, freely granting territory and power, but endeavouring to make certain that financial returns to the Crown should be assured.

This was the immediate world into which Robert Cavelier, the escaped novice, walked that night when he rapidly left the House of the Novices behind him. The change in his condition had come so suddenly at the end that he had made no plans, and his one thought was to put distance between himself and his recent prison-house. He was safe enough from pursuit until morning, as the exchange of prisoners would not be discovered until Father Anselm made his regular visit, but even this advantage was small enough, and Robert increased his speed, turning down a side street which led to the river. As he did so, he came into violent collision with a man walking hurriedly in the opposite direction.

"A murrain on ye!" growled the man, half

in pain, half in startled anger.

"'T was an accident," said Robert, quickly;
"I trust you are not hurt."

"Your pardon, Reverence," replied the man, removing his cap and bowing awkwardly as he observed the cassock.

Robert flushed hotly at the mistake, having forgotten until now that he was still enveloped in Jean's garment.

"T is a fortunate meeting, father," continued the man, seriously; "I myself was hurrying to find a priest to say a prayer over my poor messmate before he dies. Will you come, sir?"

"Willingly," replied Robert, seeing no alternative. He followed the man's lead until they reached a wretched dwelling, close to the water's edge, wondering at the ease with which his guide picked his way up the broken stairs in the utter darkness.

"Have a care, sir! There's a step after the door opens."

A moment more and Robert found himself in a small garret, partly filled with men and women of the lowest stamp, who had gathered to watch the final struggles of a poor wretch lying upon a bundle of rags on the floor in the extreme corner of the room. The voices ceased in their babel as Robert quickly pushed his way through the throng and knelt beside the dying man.

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"You're only just in time, father," said the man, faintly, a gleam of satisfaction lighting the coarse, grizzled face as his dim eyes fell upon the priestly garments; "you're only just in time. I've had no use for priests in my life, father, but somehow I felt as tho' I'd stand a better chance when I got over the other side if I had a prayer said for me now."

Robert repeated the prayer for the dying.

"Thank 'ee, father, thank 'ee," said the wretch, with scarcely audible voice, "I don't know as how 't will do me any good, but it's my last chance. Tell the captain why I didn't keep my promise. Tell him I'd rather go to New France with him than to hell in my own ship. Tell him—" The voice ceased, the body was convulsed with a final agony, and the soul had gone to plead its own cause.

"He is dead!" Robert answered to the inquiring looks of the men and women who crowded the squalid pallet to take a last farewell of their comrade; but his thoughts were not of the lifeless body before him. Those last words of the dying man had brought him an

inspiration.

"Who was this man?" he asked abruptly, turning to his first acquaintance. "What did he mean by speaking of ships and New

France?"

"Jacques Moulin, sir. He was a sailor, like me, sir, and if he'd lived he'd have sailed tomorrow for New France."

"Is there a ship sailing for New France to-morrow?"

"There is, sir, soon after daybreak."

"And are you going on her?"

"Not me, sir; I'd rather take poor Jacques' chances of sailing straight to hell, as he said, sir, than go to New France!"

"Can you take me to the ship? I wish to send a message by the captain. But first let me change these garments, else I may be stopped again before I get there."

"I'll be glad to serve you, sir. Here is poor Jacques' old kit; he'll have no further use

for it."

Robert quickly doffed the cassock and slipped the loose sailor costume over the few clothes which remained beneath. Thus arrayed and with his companion of the night still serving as guide, he again found himself in the street, and less than an hour later the dark outline of a ship, quietly riding at anchor in the river, greeted his sight. Robert waited until daybreak brought the ship's boat to shore, when he reported to the captain. Jacques Moulin had ended his earthly voyages, but his substitute, bearing the same name, made good his con-

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tract for the hazardous journey to the New World.

Robert's depressed spirits rose at once. Here was the opportunity he sought. Little cared he where or what the New World was. So long as it differed from the old one, so long as it was distant from the scenes of his existence thus far, he welcomed it with outstretched arms. And hours later, as the ship slowly sailed away from the shores of France, Robert Cavelier, drawing in the bracing salt air, realised almost for the first time that he was a man grown, with a man's liberties and a man's ambitions.

Not until the ship was well under way did Robert feel fully satisfied that he was beyond all possibility of pursuit, but as the land gradually faded away in the distance, his happiness knew no bounds. Events could not have happened more fortunately, as even a few days on shore would have meant certain hardship to him, being without money and not daring to disclose himself to any of his old-time friends. More than this, no one would think of searching for him in that vast wilderness across the seas. Neither the rough commands of the captain nor the curses showered upon him because of his ignorance of sea duties served to lessen the keen delight of the experience. Fortunately several of those who had shipped for

this uncertain voyage were as little skilled as himself, or "Jacques Moulin" would have lost his reputation as a sailor forever.

The elements refused to take advantage of the ill-equipped little ship and her strangely assorted crew. The days followed one another with little to vary the monotony, and Robert had ample opportunity to become acquainted to a greater or less degree as he chose with his fellow-voyagers. The larger portion of these went to make up a company of fifty soldiers who were being sent out by Colbert in response to a memorial received by him from Governor Courcelle, begging for reinforcements to protect the infant colonies against the Indians. addition to the fifty soldiers, - the mighty army the King sent to uphold his sovereignty in the new country, - there were a score of adventurers like Robert himself, who sought the realisation of those wonderful stories of the wealth and beauty of the new land which had reached Paris, and a small company of nuns, intent on aiding in the noble work of their sisters in the wilderness. They were the only women on board save the captain's wife and the wives and daughters of two of the adventurers, who were taking their families with them to Montreal, in the New World.

The captain had made the voyage once be-

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fore, and he was particularly proud of his accomplishment. Easily persuaded to relate his observations, he delighted and terrified by turn the eager voyagers, who absorbed his words with intense seriousness. It was from him that Robert learned of the new race of men who had been masters of this great domain until the white man had set up his abode in their midst, gradually reaching out until the Indians were forced to forget their former boundaries. From him, too, Robert heard of the trackless forests, the rivers new to man's eye, and the boundless territory into which even the native savages had scarcely penetrated. As he heard these tales he felt a new desire growing stronger and stronger within him. He had entered upon this unexpected voyage accidentally, but it was leading him straight to the opportunity for which his heart craved. Back in the House of the Novices, - which time now seemed years ago, - he had been conscious of something for which he yearned, but he had not known what. Now he knew. The captain's stories had touched the spring which started the hidden mechanism to work. His visionary nature, made more practical by the trials through which he had passed, now found ample food upon which to feed, and in his dreams he imagined himself leaving the settlement behind him, and pushing out

into the wilderness, — in search of he knew not what, arriving at last he knew not where.

After eight long weeks, the anticipated day arrived when the welcome sight of land was promised, and the eager voyagers crowded the bow of the ship, shouting to one another in a delirium of joy as what is now known as St. Paul Island came gradually into view. The barren mica ledges, bleak as they were, seemed a token of reward after their long patience. On through Cabot Strait, a few hours later, could be seen the perpendicular cliffs of Bird Rocks.

"Snow, snow!" ran from mouth to mouth, as the ship sailed nearer, and each looked to the other for an explanation of the phenomenon. Nearer and nearer the ship approached, until with cries which were startling because unexpected, thousands of white-plumed gannets rose in a flock from every ledge and fissure of the cliffs, leaving them as barren as the island just left behind.

On the following morning new wonders presented themselves. Percé Rock, high and precipitous, with its great hole beaten through by the waves, was marveled at as the ship passed close beside it; but real delight came to the tired voyagers when anchor was cast in Gaspé Basin, and a small boat was put off to

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shore for a supply of fresh water. The fortunate ones selected to go on land were watched with jealous eyes by those who were obliged to remain behind, contenting themselves with longing glances cast up and down the shore, from the narrow convex point of sand over to the bold contour of the inner harbour.

The delay here, however, was not long. The sails were again hoisted, and the little ship proceeded on its journey toward its haven. Gradually, as the land became visible upon both sides, the ship's company realised that they had exchanged salt water for fresh. High cliffs on one side, rolling meadows on the other, brilliant in the season's verdure, made a pleasing panorama, and served to lessen the impatience for arrival. Then the anchor chains again rattled out, as the ship paused at its first point of importance, with the settlement of Quebec high above it. The voyagers' attention was equally divided between the first rude signs of human habitation and the little boats which had put out from the shore to welcome the rare arrival of a ship, filled with settlers eager to exchange news and comment.

But here, too, the stay must needs be short, as the ship had been equipped entirely for Montreal. With a full southwest wind, head on, the little vessel sailed slowly out of the harbour

and started up the St. Lawrence on the last leg of her long voyage. This final week, buffeted by head winds and the adverse current of the river, proved most tedious of all, but at length the destination was in sight and the end at hand.

As the ship drew nearer, the roofs of the small dwellings, built closely together, could be clearly seen. To the right on the hill was the stone windmill of the seigniors, pierced with loopholes to be used for defence in case of necessity. On the other side, at the junction of the river St. Lawrence with a small stream. stood the stone, square-bastioned fort where lived the military governor and the few soldiers of the Carignan regiment. In front and in line with the street could be seen the enclosure and the buildings of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, and near by those of the Hôtel Dieu, - both provided with defences against an Indian attack. And rising above the hospital enclosure was the rude spire of the one small church which served the spiritual needs of the entire settlement.

This was the sight of Montreal which first greeted Robert's eager gaze as he stood at the bow of the vessel, watching her sail up to her anchorage. This was the new land to which he had come that he might carve out for himself a name and a fame worthy of a man's endeavour.

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But Robert's face wore a look which did not bespeak happiness, and in his heart he felt a strange foreboding. Was this due to the austerity of the welcome, to the evident signs of a dreaded foe, or was it caused by the sight of the rude cross, standing high above the little Jesuit church in the distance? Who shall say?



CHAPTER IV
THE BIRTH
OF A
MYSTICAL
CITY





HE LITTLE SETTLEment of Montreal owed its existence to a strange chain of romantic circumstances. Nearly twenty-five years before Robert Cavelier and his shipmates landed upon its

shore, this child of the New World had been conceived and nurtured in the minds of certain enthusiastic devotees of mystical tendencies far across the water, in the old city of Paris. Jerome le Roger de la Dauversière was at his devotions one day, after having scourged his shoulders with small chains until they were raw and bleeding, wearing the belt, ingeniously manufactured with twelve hundred sharp points, to complete his torture, when he received a command from Heaven to establish a hospital and a new order of hospital nuns across the seas upon the island of Montreal, in New France.

Dauversière pondered long over the revelation. The island of Montreal was a wilderness,

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peopled, according to report, by untamed tribes of Indians, who would oppose attempts to introduce civilisation with all the forces of savage warfare. To obey the voice of Heaven this spot must needs be occupied by a colony, yet how was Monsieur Dauversière, possessed of a moderate competency and a wife and six children, to accomplish this miracle? But the way was opened to him.

At precisely the same moment that Monsieur Dauversière received his revelation, a young priest in Paris, Jean Jacques Olier by name, was upon his knees in the old church of St. Germain des Prés, and he distinctly heard a heavenly voice proclaiming to him that he was to become a light unto the Gentiles. Further revelations instructed him to establish a company of priests upon the island of Montreal in the New France, to advance the teachings of the Jesuit Church. Thus it was that Dauversière and Olier were brought together by a divine agency, although previously wholly unknown to each other; and their combined strength was now concentrated upon the sacred undertaking.

The necessary capital for the enterprise was soon forthcoming, and the Sieur de Maisonneuve, a gentleman skilled in arms and possessed of rare chivalry, was selected to take command of the forty-five men who went to

make up their company. Mademoiselle Mance received divine instructions to join them, that she might superintend the establishment of the House of Nuns; and during the following February this remarkable assemblage embarked for the scene of their consecrated labours,—"to establish the banner of Christ," to use Dauversière's own words, "in an abode of desolation and a haunt of demons."

It is not within the province of this narrative to relate the details of their tempestuous voyage to the New World; of their cruel reception by the authorities of Quebec, who jealously resented their arrival; of their unexpected reinforcements in the persons of Marguerite Bourgeoys, whose face and works form the fairest picture in all that barbaric history, and of Madame de la Peltrie, most zealous of all in her devotion to the Faith. It is not for us to pass judgment upon these enthusiasts, adventurers though they were, who sacrificed all that was dear to them in life in fulfilling what they believed to be the call of Heaven. Their heroism has meant more to our own past and present than can easily be imagined, and we are bound to honour them for the steadfastness of their devotion.

We can imagine the little fleet, comprising a pinnace, a flat-bottomed sail-boat, and two row-boats, as it approaches Montreal. The

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weary company are singing a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. They strike the shore at last. Maisonneuve springs from his boat and falls upon his knees on the bank, quickly followed by other members of his company. The stores are landed, and at once an altar is erected in tribute to the guiding hand which has safely steered their course. Father Vimont, the Superior of the Jesuit missions, takes his place beside it, while all the company kneel before him. He is clad in the full rich raiment of his office, and the old man presents a striking figure in the picture. The Host is raised and the rite performed, and now the priest addresses the little company.

"You are a grain of mustard seed, that shall rise and grow until its branches overshadow the earth. You are few in number, but your work is the work of God. His smile is upon you, and

your children shall inhabit the land."

This is his benediction. The daylight fast fades into twilight, and twilight into night. Here and there flicker myriads of fireflies, which are captured and imprisoned together into garlands with which to adorn the sacred altar, as the thick darkness falls over all. Again the voices are raised in hymns of praise and in prayers for the future welfare of this child whose birth we have attended.

It was perhaps not strange that Robert Cavelier, the escaped novice, should instinctively feel the presence of these associations as his foot first trod the new land, even though twenty-five years had passed. It was perhaps not strange that he should have felt misgivings he could not define, and for that reason to be feared.

The arrival of a ship from France was an event of no small importance to the self-exiled people of Montreal. Months had passed since the last evidence had come to them that they were not entirely forgotten. The severity of their daily life, the terror inspired by the Indians, and the exposed position of the settlement made the arrival of a company of soldiers, small though it was, and the addition of new colonists, a matter of tremendous import. It was natural, therefore, that almost before the rattle of the anchor-chains ceased, the vessel was surrounded by the rudely constructed boats of the settlers, filled with men eager to welcome the strangers to their midst.

Curiosity was the ruling passion of the moment. The colonists were eager to scan the features of the new-comers for a possible familiar face, and the chance of a crumb of news from relatives and friends long since left behind. The voyagers, face to face with new scenes and unknown conditions, strove to penetrate

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the stolid expressions of the weather-beaten settlers, there to read the true story of their lives in this almost isolated wilderness. Was there fear or despair behind that outward calm? If so, the new arrivals failed to find it. Was there confidence or hope? If so, upon what could it possibly be based? Even the hardiest of the adventurers marveled at the serenity in the faces of their welcomers, which shone forth with added lustre because of the darkness of its background of austerity and danger.

Few words were spoken to break the silence, as the small boats made their trips between the ship and the shore with the passengers and cargo. The former, few in number, were soon landed, but several days would be required to place on shore the arms and supplies which were to serve the augmented colony for perhaps many months to come. The soldiers were at once marched with much show of military importance to the small fort, where they were gladly welcomed by their brothers-in-arms of the Carignan regiment. The women were taken in charge by the hospital nuns, and the men found themselves quartered in a long, narrow building, erected after the plan taught the settlers by the civilised Indians. Its frame was formed of stout saplings, planted in a double row to make the two sides of the house, with

their tops bent together until they met. Poles were lashed across the saplings, and large sheets of bark securely fastened over all to form the roof and sides. A narrow aperture at the top acted both as entrance for light and exit for the smoke of the cooking, which was done over fires built down the centre. On either side were shelves which served as such by day, but were transformed at night into bunks for

sleeping.

It was in this house, if thus it may be dignified, that Robert was lodged on his first night in the New World. His companions of the voyage were there also, but they did not interest him. He was watching the strange, swarthy creatures who moved silently and noiselessly in and out of the building, serving their conquerors with apparently no ill-will because of their subjection. These were the civilised Indians of the settlement, first captured by force during some raid of the soldiers, and later bound with the stouter cords of Christianity by the zealous Jesuit fathers. Robert could not understand their servility. Had he once been master of this wide domain, savage though it was, he would have yielded life itself sooner than the possession of it. His sympathy was unconsciously enlisted in their behalf, for here was the submission and obedi-

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ence which had been so unbearable to him in the Old World, and because of which he had been driven to embrace the dangers of the New.

He listened to the many tales of adventure and privation related by the older settlers. These stories did not tend to relieve the anxieties of the new-comers, but to Robert they were but fuel to feed the flames of his new ambition. There was danger to be met; so much the better, since he would be forced to face less competition. There were unknown wildernesses to be traversed, and mighty rivers to be forded; this was but the opportunity he craved. But the tales of the settlers did not tell him how or where this opportunity was to be found, and this was the problem which he undertook to work out for himself.

Robert awoke early the next morning, after a restless sleep. He was glad to escape from the smoky, ill-smelling enclosure into the glorious air of a perfect September day. The settlers were not yet astir, and Robert was unobserved as he walked past the square-bastioned fort, and southward along the shore. Quite unmindful of danger, his rapid steps soon took him beyond the rough clearings and into the majesty of the primeval forest. On the left, though he could not see the water, he could hear the loud roar of the

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rapids. Intoxicated with the joy of his surroundings, and heedless of the elapsing time, he pushed eagerly forward, until after some five hours' tramping the mighty St. Lawrence lay spread out before him, widened into that broad expanse which has since been called the Lake of St. Louis.

This indeed was life! Robert's eyes sparkled as he drew in long breaths of the invigorating air. He threw himself down at the foot of a tree, and gave his imaginings full play. Here was the definite purpose for which his life had been created, and to which it was now consecrated. The New World lay before him in all its pristine beauty. It was for him to tame its savagery, to explore its secrets, and to proclaim its wonders. But in the midst of his ecstasy again came the practical question of how and whence, rudely shattering his brilliant daydream. Sobered but not disheartened, he slowly rose to his feet, and cast a long, eager look upon the scene before him. Then with a deep sigh he turned his back upon its beauties, and started to return to the settlement.

It was not difficult for Robert to retrace his steps, for the roar of the river was a certain guide. He was so absorbed in his thoughts, however, that without a moment's warning he came full upon two struggling Indians, locked

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in close embrace and fighting a mortal combat. Each was so intent upon watching every move of his antagonist that neither observed Robert. who stood spell-bound as the strong, lithe bodies struggled this way and that, now down on the ground, rolling over and over, then up again, but never once relaxing that deathlike grip. It was such a contest as the ancient Romans must have delighted to watch in their bloody arena; and perhaps the savagery in Robert's nature had not been wholly eradicated by the ages of civilisation, for he keenly enjoyed the spectacle. He recognised one of the contestants as a convert named Piskaret, whom he had seen at the settlement the night before, while the other Indian was an Iroquois upon the war-path, for he was bedecked with the feathers and paint which had become such dreaded emblems to the colonist.

As the battle became fiercer, the combatants broke away from each other for a moment, but almost instantly they were together again. In that moment, however, both of the Indians saw Robert, and the struggle took on a new interest.

"Run, friend, run!" hoarsely ejaculated Piskaret, whose breath was nearly spent; "I will

hold him while you run!"

The Iroquois redoubled his efforts. Here was an opportunity for a white man's scalp as

well, for he had quickly noted that Robert was unarmed. Both the Indians were on the ground now, Piskaret underneath and fast weakening. Robert had not thought of entering into the conflict until he saw the Iroquois slowly moving one hand toward the knife in his belt, while the other held Piskaret firmly by the throat. He hesitated no longer; throwing himself fiercely upon the Iroquois, he seized the hand which

now grasped the knife.

Robert Cavelier's life during the past three years had given him no chance for developing the splendid physique with which Nature had endowed him. When the battle turned, therefore, from the two Indians to the Indian and the white man, the latter found himself as a child in the hands of his active opponent. Robert realised his danger, and knew that his one hope lay in keeping control of that hand which held the knife. But little by little the Iroquois forced Robert's grip, and little by little it was borne in on Robert that his hour had come. It was his first struggle toward the conquest of the unknown world, and it was to be his last! This, rather than the danger in which he knew his life stood, was what caused the pain in his heart. The disappointment of his hopes, the thwarting of his ambitions so recently. aroused, but no less keen in their intensity, —

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this was what made him so desperate, but all in vain. His grip upon that wrist of iron was surely weakening, and when it loosened all would be over.

But Robert had forgotten Piskaret. When the Iroquois' attack had been diverted, Piskaret had nearly ceased breathing, but the fingers at his throat were released just in time. Slowly strength came back to him, and at a glance he realised Robert's danger. Piskaret was unarmed, but the Iroquois' tomahawk still stuck in his belt. Could Robert hold that wrist until the weapon could be secured? That was the question. It was answered when Robert's grasp at last gave way and at the same time the warm blood spurted over his face. He wondered where he had been struck, as he felt no pain. Then his antagonist fell at his feet, and he saw the impassive Piskaret standing before him with the dripping tomahawk in his hand.

"Good!" grunted the satisfied Indian; "good! You save Piskaret's life; Piskaret save your life. We be friends while the sun warms and the wind blows." And he held out his hand after the fashion he had learned at the settlement.

Robert grasped the hand outstretched over the body of the dead Indian. Little did he realise that this union with the red man was to prove the means for which he searched; little did he

know that in this tableau was pictured the hope of his future success. It was the Indian, with all his wiles, yet freed from the white man's jealousy, who was to give Robert Cavelier the first true friendship and real assistance of his life.

Piskaret's companionship was the influence which changed Robert's imaginings into definite certainties. The Algonquin was a man of unusual experience, and he possessed such marked intelligence that it had been considered a stroke of great good fortune when he accepted the Jesuit teachings and adopted a civilised life. Robert found in him just those characteristics which he most needed, and the Indian, first bound by ties of gratitude, later gave to his friend an absolute devotion which knew no wavering.

As Robert became better acquainted with Piskaret he unfolded to him his plans, indefinite though they were. The Indian entered heartily into them, and from him Robert learned of that trackless forest which stretched away toward the setting sun; of the mighty river which the Indians called the Ohio, and which we now know as the Mississippi, rising in the land of the Senecas and flowing to the sea, but at so distant a point that it would require a year's journey to reach its mouth. The apparent accuracy of this information sobered Robert

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in his outward bearing, even though it fanned his imagination into flame; and he spent days and nights in determining the geographical bearing of his new learning. There could be no doubt about it: this was the long-looked-for passage to the Southern Sea; this great river must empty into the "Vermilion Sea" and grant him a western passage to China.

But Piskaret told Robert of other things than these. He impressed upon him that it was absolutely necessary for him to learn the Indian language before he could hope to be successful; he urged upon him that his company must be made up of hardy and intrepid men who feared neither danger nor privation; and he also persuaded Robert's impatient soul that the approval of "Onontio," the Governor of New France, must be obtained to carry weight with such tribes as had signed treaties of peace with the white men.

Robert could but see the wisdom of the sagacious Indian's advice. It meant a vexatious delay, but he admitted to himself that it made the success of his undertaking the more assured. He therefore set about to establish himself for the next two or three years in such a manner as might make the term of postponement as brief as possible.

The Seminary of St. Sulpice, controlled by

the Jesuit corporation of priests, had supplanted by this time the association of devotees which Maisonneuve had established years before, and was now in the position of proprietor and feudal lord of Montreal. Robert Cavelier's dread of the Jesuits had largely vanished, as no one here knew of his past experiences, nor was his history likely to be discovered. At all events, Robert was ready to take advantage of any steppingstone to the accomplishment of his purpose, and he therefore eagerly accepted the opportunity afforded him by them to become the feudal proprietor of the large tract of land located at what was later derisively termed "La Chine," because of Robert's early belief that he had found the western passage to China, - just where he had first gazed upon the Lake of St. Louis before his meeting with Piskaret. It was important to the seminary that this point be protected against Indian attack, and the terms upon which it was granted were exceedingly generous.

Here it was that Robert Cavelier became the seignior of a little colony of settlers, establishing a palisaded village, and receiving a yearly revenue from each colonist. One might have thought him contented there, respected by his less fortunate neighbours, beloved by his constant companion Piskaret, and with his seigniory located in the choicest spot in all New

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France. But Robert's neighbours could not hear the Song of the Sirens which came to him from the broad surface of Lake St. Louis. as its wave beat upon his shore; nor could they understand the promises which the wind brought him from beyond the forests of Chateauguay and Beauharnais across the lake. Robert forced himself to be content for the time being that his body should be restricted to the limitations of his seigniory, while he mastered the Indian language, and laid aside sou by sou from his revenue, the capital which was to gather together that company of bold and intrepid spirits who would work out as his agents the plan which controlled his life. But his mind recognised no bounds, and day after day and night after night it wandered across the lake and the forests, painting pictures of the great beyond which at times almost compelled him to break his resolution.

At last the time arrived when Robert knew that he was sufficiently familiar with the Indian tongue to undertake his expedition. The amount which he had been able to set aside was more meagre, to be sure, than he had hoped, but he could sell his seigniory and thus be fairly well equipped. He was therefore ready to make the trip to Quebec with his trusted friend Piskaret, in the hope of interesting the Gov-

ernor and the Intendant in the plans he had

so carefully perfected.

What a weight of force and determination that frail canoe contained as it shot from the bank of La Chine early that morning! The dusky, impassive figure at the bow was merely performing its duty to its master; but the keen, closely-knitted features of the man at the stern showed factors of far greater import. Robert Cavelier had developed much in the three years which had just elapsed. He had come to the New World with no plans matured, with no definite purpose; he was now a man in whom burned the passionate fire of ambition. This journey meant to him the reward of his long self-denial, and its importance could not fail to place its impress upon his face. There might be nothing but disappointment ahead for him at Quebec, but that thought had not once occurred to him. Success must be at the end of such unalterable determination as his. The world was not dead to him now. The golden sun of promise was rising upon his life after many years of darkness, and the waters of the St. Lawrence, over which the canoe swiftly sped, were gloriously coloured by its radiance.

Out across Lake St. Louis, straight into the rapids of La Chine, which carried the frail bark like an egg-shell upon the crest of its

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dashing spray, down past the seigniories of Contrecœur, Varennes, Longueuil, Boucherville, and Verchères, sped the light canoe impelled by the sturdy paddling of Robert and Piskaret. The rough-hewn stonework of St. Sulpice was dimly outlined in the grey morning light; the closely-massed wooden houses, the frowning mill of the seigniors, and the Hôtel Dieu could be barely distinguished as the still sleeping settlement of Montreal was left behind them. By the time the sun rose Robert was well upon his voyage, and the cheering warmth caused his spirits to rise even to a greater pitch of confidence and enthusiasm. The fort of Sorel. the military seigniories of Becancour, Lotbinière, and Lussandière, and others as vet uncompleted, greeted his eye as the sixty leagues passed behind him, until at last, five days after he had left La Chine, he reached Quebec, Montreal's jealous sister, and his first step toward his western aspirations was accomplished.



CHAPTER V THE HERO BECOMES AN EXPLORER





UEBEC NATURALLY

was a spot of great interest to Robert, and as the canoe shot along beneath the bold promontory, giving him a nearer view than he had gained from the ship three

years before, he gazed with undisguised curiosity. Many were the tales which came to Montreal from the older settlement, exaggerated by distance and distorted by jealousy; for between the two there existed undenied discord, ever kept alive by the rivalry between the two Jesuit organisations.

Success had crowned the efforts of Father Laval to gain the temporal control of Quebec. There was a Governor and an Intendant, to be sure, but the Bishop was in such constant communication with his Order in Paris, which in turn kept in such close touch with King Louis and his counsellors, that it was a hardy thing for even the Governor himself openly to thwart his will. Made bolder by the importance which

this power brought to their organisation, the priests were almost intolerable in their attitude, not hesitating even to enter the houses of the inhabitants to learn all that went on within, and frequently requiring the worthy householder to rise from his table to be confessed. Should they, the chosen representatives of their Order in New France, share with the Sulpitians of Montreal the power for which they had striven so zealously? Far from it. The rival settlement must be endured, because it too was made up of Jesuits, but it must not be encouraged, since in the minds of the Bishop and his co-workers at Quebec, it constituted an element of disorganisation in the Church.

Robert lent willing ears to the stories of duplicity and craft which the settlers and the Sulpitians freely told as characteristics of Quebec, but this did not lessen the interest with which he eagerly took in with his glance the little settlement before him, — the weak, ill-garrisoned, poorly protected capital of the colony, which represented the strength of Louis XIV. in the New World.

Far above him, on the edge of the precipice, he saw the Fort of St. Louis, with the banner of France floating proudly in the breeze. Beyond this was the cathedral, its cross-mounted tower in silhouette against the sky; and below

stood the closely-massed houses of the merchants. The Upper Town, as it was called, included the priests, the nuns, the government officials, and the soldiers; and here also were the chateau, the convents, and the seminary. At the foot of the steep rock, along the water's edge, lay the Lower Town, where lived and laboured the commercial representatives of the settlement, engaged principally in the beaver trade, which dominated Quebec. Hither the trapper and the bois-coureur brought together

their peltry to be shipped to France.

The seat of the government was at the Château St. Louis. Here lived the Governor, and from his lofty outlook he commanded a marvelous view of land and water. Even Robert's little canoe could not have been beached without his notice, had he cared to gaze out from the chateau over the broad expanse of the St. Lawrence. The soldiers were on guard at the fort, and not far distant stood the Ursuline Convent, where Mother Mary of the Incarnation presided over her charge of pupils and nuns; and only a little way beyond, Robert saw the Hôtel Dieu and the heavily-constructed buildings of the Jesuits. Their new church had just been erected opposite the great church of Notre Dame, which stood so long as a memorial to the massive foundations of their tenets.

It required no particular diplomacy for Robert to secure an audience with the Governor. Courcelle was an old soldier who had served his King on both sides of the water, and any plan which promised advantage to his sovereign was certain of careful consideration. And no man could have presented his cause more effectively than Robert Cavelier. He had held this picture of the trackless West and its possibilities in his mind for so long a time that it had taken firm possession of him. So real had it become, indeed, that it seemed a task almost accomplished.

It was a scene worthy of a master's painting which was witnessed in the low-ceiled room of the old chateau that day. The Governor, with his well-preserved figure, his sunburnt face, his beard and hair closely cut and well turned grey, his dignified and soldierly bearing, was plainly interested, though somewhat incredulous. Before him was Robert Cavelier in the proud strength of his youth, drawing for the older man a brilliant picture of what his plan promised. Too eager in his enthusiasm to remain seated, he poured into the Governor's ears that Song of the Sirens which had come to him so often at his own seigniory across the Lake of St. Louis.

"Look, Excellency," cried Robert, pointing
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from the window to the broad surface of the St. Lawrence spread out before them, "look at the mighty river which has become the property of our King. Think how he values it, as one of the priceless jewels of his crown. But far away to the westward is another river, beside which this beautiful St. Lawrence is but a stream. It is to be reached only through trackless forests, by fording streams, by enduring hardship, peril, privation, —but is it not worth it all? I will find this river, upon which no white man has ever gazed, I will possess it in the name of France, and I will open up to you the passage to the Southern Sea."

"But what proof have you of this?" asked the Governor.

It was Piskaret who answered. Up to this time he had stood in the shadow of the room with his arms folded, erect, impassive; and his quick response to the Governor's question was an evidence of the enthusiasm which had been aroused by his association with Robert.

"Listen, Onontio. Many years ago I was hunting with my people, the Algonquins. We were many days' journey from our wigwams when we came upon a river which no Algonquin had ever seen before. Quickly we built canoes and set out upon this river, stopping each night and advancing each day until we

knew not what space of time had passed; and yet we came not to the outlet. We journeyed on for many weeks, until we cared to go no farther; then we turned back and rejoined our people, who had thought us dead long since. Seven times had the moon waxed, and seven times had it waned, yet found we not the mouth of that great river."

Piskaret ceased and drew back into the

shadow, again impassive.

"A marvelous story!" ejaculated the Governor, turning to Robert. "You must give me time to think this over, and Talon, the Intendant, must hear what you have to say. What you and the Indian have told has much of interest. Remain here as my guest for a few days."

"Gladly, sir," replied Robert, greatly encour-

aged; "I thank you for your hospitality."

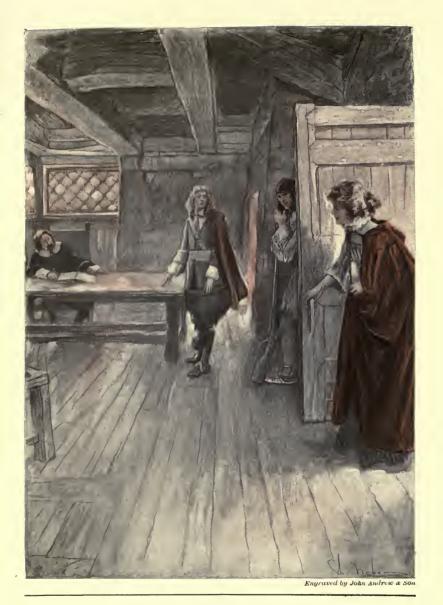
Governor Courcelle's family consisted of but his daughter and himself. Anne Courcelle was just reaching womanhood, and formed a brilliant contrast to her father. Tall, as women go, her well-moulded figure was in perfect proportion, and even the coarsely-woven garments of the colonists which had replaced the silks and laces she brought from France could not conceal her grace and symmetry. The bracing air of Quebec and her active life out of doors had given her

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health and colour unknown to the companions she had left behind her when she accompanied her father to his post in the New World, to which the King had appointed him five years before. She was but a child then, thirteen years of age, and she had thought it grand indeed to be a governor's daughter; but the five years had shown her the other side of the picture, and it sometimes seemed to her as if the monotony of her existence would drive her mad. For her father's sake she accepted the inevitable, concealing how great a sacrifice she was making for him.

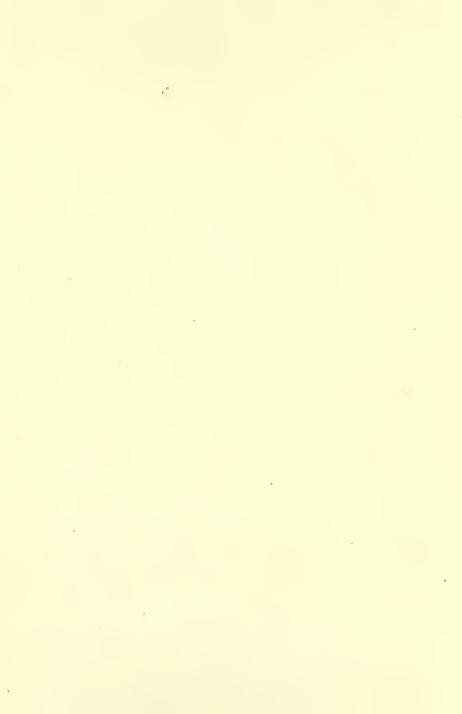
Just as Robert's interview with the Governor was at an end, Anne entered the room unannounced. In the dim light she did not observe the visitors, but they could not fail to notice her. The hood of her cape had fallen back, permitting the wealth of chestnut hair in its disarranged beauty to form a frame to the fair face beneath. The brown eyes sparkled with enthusiasm, and to Robert she seemed the embodiment of loveliness. He drew in his breath quickly, and hastily stepped back into the shadow with Piskaret, keeping his eyes fixed upon the girl before him.

"Oh, father," she cried, approaching the Governor, "you must leave this dingy room and go up to the summit of the Rock with me.



Anne Interrupts the Conference

"The hood of her cape had fallen back, permitting the wealth of chestnut hair, in its disarranged beauty, to form a frame to the fair face beneath."



The air is glorious, and I have run all the way down here to get you."

"You do not see our visitor, my daughter," replied the old man, checking her kindly. "This is Master Cavelier, who has come here from Montreal to tell us wondrous tales, and I have asked him to remain at the chateau until I can give the matter proper thought."

Anne curtsied demurely as Robert advanced into the light.

"I crave Master Cavelier's pardon for the interruption, and trust he will accept our welcome to Quebec."

"Our interview is ended, daughter, and I suggest that you invite our visitor to be my substitute to accompany you to the summit of the Rock. He can endure the climb far better than can I."

The invitation was not an unalloyed pleasure to Robert. The only woman who had ever before come into his life had been his mother, and even she was but a memory to him. Anne represented a side of life which was entirely new; and as he followed her through the garden of the chateau and walked beside her up the steep path which led to the summit of the Rock, he felt overpowered by a diffidence which was a sensation as unpleasant as it was novel. The girl, however, quite at her ease,

spoke of one thing after another until their goal was reached, as if unconscious of Robert's embarrassment.

"There!' she exclaimed, quite out of breath. "Saw you ever anything more beautiful?"

It was indeed a wondrous sight. Below them lay the beautiful St. Lawrence, broadened just in front by its junction with the St. Charles. Then it stretched away to the south mile after mile, narrowed down between its banks. Far beyond were great valleys and forests, contrasting their ever-varying shades of green with the pure silver of the water. Robert gazed at it long before he ventured to reply.

"'T is beautiful indeed, Mistress Courcelle, and I thank you for giving me this opportunity of seeing it. I know the river well, but never had I thought how fair it was to look upon."

"My father said that you came from Montreal," continued Anne, noticing that her companion lapsed into silence; "is it like Quebec? I have never been there."

"Nay, nay," responded Robert, "'t is quite different. 'T is less forward — less completed — than Quebec."

"And have you grown accustomed to this new home in the wilderness?"

"Yes, Mistress Courcelle," replied Robert, simply. "T is the only home I have ever

known in which I have found happiness. Yes, I have grown accustomed to it, and I love it."

Anne was surprised by his intensity and the

evident tone of sadness in his voice.

"I crave pardon, sir," she said quietly, "for having quite unwittingly recalled unhappy memories."

"Ah, Mistress Courcelle, forgive me for permitting the pain of the past to enter into the pleasure of the present," replied Robert, hastily; "you could not know how much the freedom of the life here means to me. I have struggled hard and laboured long to bring about the realisation of the one ambition of my life, and now that I am on the verge either of gratification or disappointment I can scarce contain myself. Again I pray you, forgive me."

"Right willingly, Master Cavelier; I understand full well how trying are uncertainties and delays. I wish you well, sir, in your under-

taking, whatever it may be."

Robert looked into her face with grateful pleasure. These were the first words of sympathy which he had heard for years, and they moved him deeply.

"You are generous, fair mistress, — more so than I deserve, and I thank you for it. Your

good wishes will help me much."

"If I can help you further, I will gladly do so. Your earnestness betokens an important enterprise."

"The most potent aid lies in your father's favourable decision, but I thank you none the

less for what you say."

Robert relapsed into silence, his eyes stretched to the west. Anne's curiosity was aroused. What could be the quest which had brought this strange, serious young man from Montreal to Quebec, and which so dominated him that he betrayed himself almost by the first words he spoke? She looked at the figure beside her, gazing out across the water as if entirely unconscious of her presence. Anne's nature could endure this suspense no longer.

"What do you see so far to the westward,

Master Cavelier?" she asked, smiling.

Her words brought Robert to himself, but he

was not thinking of her when he replied.

"What do I see, ask you? Far to the west-ward I see wondrous beauties waiting to be found; I see unknown powers waiting for their conqueror; I see a mighty empire waiting to be claimed."

The strange words startled Anne, and she regarded her companion keenly. Surely there was something more than vagaries behind the manifest sincerity of the voice which spoke

them. At all events, it could do no harm to enter into the same spirit.

"But are you not looking over the tops of the trees which make up those impenetrable forests, Master Cavelier? Are there not obstacles hidden beneath which the eye reaches not?"

"Ay, many obstacles, and perils too; but should these prevent the attempt when so great a reward awaits beyond?"

The girl's evident interest encouraged Robert to unfold to her those plans which lay so close to his heart. His diffidence had vanished now; he felt at home in the subject which possessed him; and Anne listened with undisguised admiration as he painted his picture with the bold strokes of a master, in glowing colours heightened by the rays of the setting sun. The time passed all too quickly, and both regretted that the hour had come to return to the chateau.

This first visit with Anne to the summit of the Rock was destined to be but the beginning of a much longer stay than Robert had anticipated. The Governor, occupied with pressing matters of administration, delayed his visitor's departure until the days turned into weeks. Under other conditions Robert's impatient spirit would have rebelled, but as he

and Anne day after day exchanged confidences in the chateau garden or climbed to their point of vantage upon the Rock, he realised that a new influence had come into his life, and that the world contained for him more than undiscovered forests and unknown rivers. He found himself an explorer already, but the task which now confronted him was to resolve the mysteries of a maiden's heart.

Robert had no reason to think that Anne in any way responded to his growing attachment. No word of it had entered into their conversations, which touched upon the intricacies of colonial life and government, of Anne's early days in France, of his own experiences, but most often of his mission to Quebec. Robert delighted to watch her enthusiasm kindle to fever heat as he stood upon the Rock and pointed out to her the path which he believed led to the great river of the Ohio and the passage to the Southern Sea. Of these things they talked; but Robert ever hesitated to refer to the subject which now overshadowed the one that had so long been the controlling influence of his life.

One day it happened that Robert was drawn to tell her of his aversion to the Jesuits. To his surprise Anne sprang to her feet with flaming cheeks.

"So do I, and so does father; but you must not speak it in Quebec. Father is obliged to endure their insults and do their bidding as if they were the agents of the King himself. These hateful priests come to the chateau and fawn about as if they were the most humble subjects in all New France, but so soon as father's plans differ from their own, straightway a letter goes to Paris which is certain to bring a rebuke from Colbert and added insolence from the priests."

"Insolence, say you?" asked Robert, amazed by Anne's revelation. "Surely they keep their antagonism to the government beneath the surface?"

"By no means," replied Anne, warmly. "Why, only a few days before you arrived a complaint was made that Father Raguenneau had entered the household of one of the settlers, and was interfering with his methods of disciplining his family. Father sent a sergeant to him with a simple request to moderate his efforts. What reply do you suppose came back? Go tell Monsieur de Courcelle that I visited my people before he was Governor, and that I shall visit my people after he has ceased to be Governor.' And father is absolutely powerless to punish him for his insolence."

"It is well that your father has Talon to assist him in this difficult business."

"Talon assist father? You do not know him! He is a weathercock, a butterfly! M'sieur the Intendant is sent here by the King to be a spy upon my father and to send back word to France of all that happens here. Father is the soldier; Talon is the diplomat. He is always on the winning side, whether it be with the Bishop or with the people, while father is the one to carry out the unpopular measures. You may be sure that no complaint of Talon ever goes to Colbert."

"But the Jesuits have surely contributed much to the government of the colony in gaining such control over the Indians," said Robert, surprised himself that his spirit of fairness made him for the moment the champion of those

whom he considered his only enemies.

"Indeed they have," Anne answered promptly, "and they have done more than that. If they would but keep to their religious work instead of trying to control the politics of the colony, they would be the most valued members of the settlement. They are absolutely tireless in their labours, and pass through all sorts of hardships, — go without food, tramp great distances through the forests with bleeding feet, even to baptise a dying Indian; and they suffer [74]

torture and even death without a murmur. Why, I remember when Father Jogues was captured by the Iroquois while he was on his way to an Indian mission. His captors beat him until he was unconscious, and then tore off his finger-nails with their teeth. When he came to himself he saw an old Indian lying beside him, and he stretched out his bleeding hands and baptised him. Then the Iroquois beat him again, and pulled out his beard and hair, and laid burning embers upon his body until he fainted. After this they forced him to journey from one Mohawk town to another, cutting off his thumb at one stopping-place and hanging him up by the wrists at another,—testing the extent of torture he could endure before he died. Oh, I shudder as I think of it!"

Anne covered her face with her hands for a moment before she continued,—

"Yet suffering as he was, when an ear of green corn was thrown to him for food, he took a few rain-drops which clung to the husks and baptised four Huron prisoners who had just been brought in. Was it not heroic? And yet Father Jogues escaped and returned to France, only to come back again and to be finally murdered by those very savages for whose salvation he had worked. And this is only one example. Why, why won't they be content to

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carry on their noble, self-denying labours, and leave father and the government alone!"

Anne's narrative quite exhausted her. Robert had listened with double interest. Here was an example of that blind obedience which every true disciple of Loyola must possess. Father Jogues was but one spoke in the wheel which was slowly but steadily turning in response to the requirements of that mighty Company. His personal martyrdom was sublime, but the "spirit of the Order" looked upon it simply as a step in the furthering of its great purpose. Robert understood why the Jesuits sought to gain control over the Indians; he could have explained to Anne why they would never be content to withhold their hands from the government of the colony; - but he feared that the explanation would lead too deeply into that portion of his own history which thus far he had kept carefully to himself.

Robert assisted Anne to her feet, and for a little time they stood in silence, gazing far into the west. Neither seemed to look for any response from the other, but both were wrapped in their own thoughts. Is it not ever so when two personalities are unconsciously drifting toward that moment which is to make them one? The subconscious appreciation between them becomes more definite, the necessity for

spoken thought is less apparent, and the perfectness of understanding is complete. Robert knew how much more important his long-cherished plan had become since Anne came into his life: he had made promises to her of what that wilderness would bring forth, which must now be fulfilled; Anne recognised that Robert's visit had removed the load of loneliness and discouragement from her heart, that to her he was no visionary, that his faith had been imparted to her, and that she shared his sanguine expectations. Yet the moment had not come when either could express these thoughts to the other.

It was Robert who broke the silence.

"Do you think that Talon will look favour-

ably upon my petition?"

"I know not what M'sieur Talon may do; it all depends upon what outside influence is brought to bear upon him. You are sure of father. He believes in you and will help you all he can, but I have told you how firmly his hands are often tied. I will try to learn from him what attitude the Intendant has taken."

Slowly and silently they walked together back to the chateau, no word being spoken until they had nearly reached the grey stone walls. Suddenly Robert stopped and the girl beside him looked into his face inquiringly. His gaze

was fixed upon her so intently for a moment that her eyes fell.

"Why do you look at me like that, Master

Robert? Have I offended you?"

"Offended me?" Robert smiled, then his

face grew serious again.

"Nay, not that," he answered; "I was trying to hold back the words which my heart has been crying out for days, but I can do so no longer."

Anne gave no evidence that she heard him. Her eyes were fixed upon a slender tendril of ivy which had failed to gain its hold upon the stern old stones. But even in the twilight Robert saw the heightened colour in her cheeks,

and it gave him courage.

"Can you not surmise what those words are, Mistress Anne? I came here with one thought in my mind, one wish in my heart, but now the great desire which possessed me means nothing unless I can take into that wilderness the knowledge that you are interested in the success of my undertaking, — not for the sake of France, but for my own sake; unless I may think of you, as I lie upon the ground at night, watching the stars overhead and breathing in the odour of the pines, knowing that far away, — perhaps watching the same star, — you too are thinking of me and wishing for my safe return. Is it asking too much?"

Robert held out his hand to her and tried to find his answer in the beautiful face which Anne turned toward him. She was quite herself now, but Robert failed to recognise the mischief which sparkled in her eyes. Slyly she laid her hand in his, and Robert grasped it eagerly, but she quickly withdrew it and resumed her demure attitude. Then she made him a low curtsy, and said, with half-averted face,—

"It is not meet that I should share with France the honours of your explorations, Master Cavelier!"

Robert took a quick step toward her, but she skilfully eluded him, disappearing within the chateau. For a moment Robert stood bewildered, and then he slowly followed his tormentor. Was she making sport of him, or could it be true that he had not been too presumptuous, after all? He could not tell, but he awaited Anne's reappearance at the evening meal with much impatience.

After supper the Governor, Anne, and Robert walked out into the chateau garden, as was their custom. Soon the old man was summoned to the council-chamber, and Anne attempted to follow her father; but Robert detained her.

"Would you run away again, Mistress Anne, after giving me so pert an answer to my question?"

"'Pert,' Master Robert, -- say you 'pert'? Should I be a loyal subject to my King were I to take for myself that which belongs to France?"

"A peace to your jesting, Anne! 'T is a matter too serious, to me at least, to treat so lightly. I have no right to ask you for an answer, for I am but a penniless adventurer, with naught but my love and my future aspirations to place before the woman I would ask to be my wife; but the heart knows no judgment, Anne, and I could not keep my secret longer. Anne! Anne! reproach me if you will for my presumption, but do not tell me that you love me not!"

Robert's arm was about her, but she did not resent it. He drew her to himself, and she did not resist. The jesting mood had vanished now, for she could read in her lover's face the pain which she had caused him. She was too happy to deny herself further the joy of accepting this strong man's devotion, and she was too proud in the winning of it to conceal her gladness longer from him. She looked full into his face, and Robert read in those deep brown eyes the answer that he craved. But the words meant even more to him.

"I cannot tell you that I do not love you. Robert, for to do so would be false. I do love

you, and I have loved you ever since I learned to know how true a heart and how brave a soul were yours."

Robert held her face in his hands and gazed into the depths of her expressive eyes. Then he pressed his lips upon her forehead in silent thankfulness and joy. Anne was startled by the intensity of his love, but was reassured by the devotion which shone from his eyes.

"I only wish I were a man," said Anne at last, "that I might join you in your expedition, and push with you through the forest mazes until the great river of the Ohio greeted our

gaze."

"Nay, nay, dear Anne," answered Robert, with a satisfied smile; "be content to remain your own fair self, that I may take you as the ideal for which to strive in all my labours."

The world had again changed for Robert Cavelier. What was once the all-absorbing passion of his life now became a means, and not an end. He would win the laurels which his explorations might bring to him, but not alone for France. He would win them for the sweet privilege of placing them upon the brow of the girl beside him, whose future was indissolubly linked with his own.



HEN ROBERT MET Anne upon the Rock the following morning he was surprised to find her angry and excited. Hardly waiting to greet him, she exclaimed,— "There has been treachery,

Robert, and M'sieur Talon is the traitor. I had a foreboding that that man would mar our

hopes."

Robert was entirely unable to understand the meaning of her words except as threatening to thwart his petition, but the one word "our" which she unconsciously used served to lessen the shock in no small degree.

Anne did not wait for Robert to question her.

"I have wondered why father delayed giving you an answer for so long a time, but I was selfish enough to be glad of any cause which should postpone the day of your departure. I knew that he thought favourably of your plans,

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CONTENT WITH HALF A LOAF

and I supposed that the Intendant had been so engaged with other matters that he had been unable to discuss them with him. But when I talked with father last night he appeared much troubled, and this morning I learn that he discussed your petition with M'sieur Talon the very night of your arrival. The Intendant asked for a day or two to consider the matter, and has invented one excuse after another to make delay, until last night he told father that the Jesuits were planning a similar expedition, and that if you undertook the journey at all he strongly favoured the joining of the two parties."

"The Jesuits planning a similar expedition!" exclaimed Robert, incredulously. "There must be some mistake, for they cannot have learned as I have from Piskaret what the great West contains. That would be too great a coinci-

dence to be believed."

"But that is where the treachery comes in! Don't you see it all? M'sieur Talon hears about your plans from father, makes a delay so that he may communicate with the priests, finds them only too glad to take advantage of the suggestion, and then 'strongly favours joining the two expeditions,' which is the same as saying that no other plan will receive his support. It is no coincidence, Robert; it is treachery through and through."

"What can be his object? He bears me no enmity, and if I am successful it will reflect credit upon him, as upon all officials of the Crown."

"But not to the extent it would if the expedition is fitted out at his suggestion, as he plans this one to be; and more than this, he wishes no success to come to the Crown save through Jesuit channels."

"Did you not tell me that the present labours of the fathers here in Quebec require every priest of the Order, and that they are calling loudly for reinforcements from Paris?"

"Yes; and it is true. The importance of the expedition must appeal to them strongly when they forget their rivalry and their jealousy enough to call upon the Sulpitians at Montreal to undertake the work."

"The Seminary priests at Montreal! Do you know that this is so?" asked Robert, even more astonished.

"Yes, Dollier de Casson has just arrived from Montreal, — evidently in response to the Bishop's message, — with a petition similar to yours, and I am sent to summon you to attend the Governor's conference at once. I have already kept you over-long, and you must hasten. Don't blame father, Robert; he will do all he can for you, but you have no idea of the in-

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trigue and the disloyalty against which he has to strive."

"The Sulpitians from Montreal!" repeated Robert to himself. "Can it be that this is the first step in the fulfilment of the Father Superior's threat?" The words rang clearly in his ears as if he were again in Paris, in the chapel of the House of the Novices,—

"Know well that wherever you may go, be it to the uttermost parts of the earth, this Order will search you out to your destruction!"

It could not be; it must not be! When those words were uttered they affected him alone; now they also concerned the woman he loved, thus adding to his determination to win in spite of all. He raised his head and looked straight into the eyes of the girl before him.

"I fear me this means trouble, Anne; but this I know: if God grants to spare my life, complications may postpone, but cannot defeat my object. I was sure of that before I came to Quebec, but now, with your faith to aid me, I am doubly sure to find the Vermilion Sea, and to watch in its reflection the sunrise of our hopes. Will you trust me, Anne, and will you wait for me? It may be years, it may be—faith, your patience must needs last long!"

Robert's face betrayed the strong emotion within. Anne had never seen him look like

this before, and she suffered with him. Softly she laid both her hands upon his shoulders and watched him as he became calm under the influence of the devotion which he read in her face.

"It will last long, Robert," she said quietly but with determination in her voice, — "it will last long; for ever if it must be so. I knew not life until you came here; I had no hope, no happiness, beyond that little line which marks our horizon. But now I live beyond that line, for all my hopes are there. Far away through those forests and across those cataracts I believe with you there lies a little Kingdom of Content where you and I will one day reign. With you my King, Robert, and I your Queen, what matters it to us what marks the limits of our empire, or where it lies?"

Robert touched his lips to the pale face so near his own.

"Ah, Anne, with faith like yours, kingdoms could indeed be won! But, come, let us know the worst. M'sieur the Intendant may not be so base a traitor as you paint him!"

Together they returned to the chateau, where Robert left Anne and entered the great council-chamber, dark with its heavy oaken beams and wainscoting and massive furniture,—the most ambitious room in all Quebec, intended to express to all beholders the majesty of that

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sovereign whose representatives administered the King's justice within.

The three men were waiting for Robert's arrival, engaged in earnest examination of a carefully-constructed map which lay upon the great table before them. Both Talon and Dollier de Casson were known to Robert by sight, but this was his first opportunity to study them closely. The personal appearance of the Intendant was effeminate, completely concealing the masculine force beneath. His face was oval, his complexion delicate, and a wealth of curls fell to his shoulders. formed a marked contrast to the rugged, soldierly bearing of the Governor beside him, and Robert readily understood how poorly fitted Courcelle was to hold his own at Court against this clever diplomat.

Dollier de Casson was a tall man with a commanding presence. He had been an officer of cavalry under Turenne before coming to Montreal, and since his arrival had proved his bravery in various Indian campaigns. So this experienced soldier was to be his rival, — to be the agent of the Jesuits to rob him of the fruits of his long-cherished aspirations! Robert's mind was filled with bitterness as he entered the council-chamber and awaited the Governor's invitation to join the group about the table.

"Approach, Master Cavelier," said the Governor, kindly; "I have discussed at much length with M'sieur the Intendant the petition regarding your proposed expedition, and have decided to grant you the letters-patent you desire."

"I thank you, sir," said Robert, simply, as the Governor paused for a moment, grateful for the evident effort which the old man was making to temper the disappointment which he knew was about to fall upon this young enthusiast to whom he had already become attached.

"In order to add strength to the undertaking, however," continued the Governor, "we have deemed it wise to join with you in your endeavours a party represented by Master Dollier, who comes to us with a similar request. Master Dollier has had much experience with the Indians, and the addition of his party will make your chances of success the stronger. These letters which M'sieur the Intendant will hand to you will commend your company to our brother governors within whose jurisdiction you may go, and Master Dollier will bear with him letters from Father Laval to any Jesuit you may meet. The King will expect much of you, Master Cavelier, and of Master Dollier, and our good wishes go with you."

It was fortunate that Robert had been pre-

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pared for a proposition so different from that which he had originally expected. Surely the hand of Fate was binding strange factors together, but there seemed to be no alternative. If Robert withdrew, the Jesuit party would push on without him; if he consented to the plan, he might work out some solution of the difficulty. Submission, apparent at least, was all that remained to him, and he determined to play the game with all his skill.

"I can but accept your judgment, sir, as for the best. I know Master Dollier for a brave man, and I shall value his co-operation. I trust, however, that Master Dollier will accept the plans upon which I have laboured for the past three years, as I have reason to believe them to be correct."

"In so far as they accord with mine own judgment, Master Cavelier," responded Dollier, with a stiff bow.

Robert bit his lip to keep back the angry words which struggled for utterance. The combination was indeed impossible, but it was none the less inevitable. Robert would start with them, for this was commanded, but not Dollier nor the Governor nor Talon himself should prevent him from breaking away from them at the earliest opportunity, and then he would push on without help or hindrance.

The Governor signified with a wave of the hand that the conference was at an end. Robert was glad to escape from the overpowering atmosphere of the room into the open air, which calmed his conflicting emotions. Anne was anxiously waiting for him in the garden, and ran to meet him as he approached.

"You are smiling, Robert," she cried, her face lighting up with pleasure; "I was wrong in thinking that M'sieur Talon would try to

thwart you."

"Nay, sweet Mistress Anne, you were but too correct in your suspicions. It is all as you surmised. The Governor, your father, has granted me letters-patent for my expedition as I besought, but with Master Dollier affixed thereto as a seal. In faith, methinks I'll break the seal when opportunity permits, and read my letters with myself alone for company!"

Robert's buoyancy was contagious, but it did not conceal from Anne the real suffering which lay beneath the careless speech with which he

greeted her.

"My brave Robert," she exclaimed admiringly, "my heart rejoices that your spirit is so strong. Success will mean the more to you and to me because you are able to surmount the obstacles. Was it decided when the expedition is to start?"

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"Not definitely, but I must leave for Montreal at once. When you see the moon rise over the St. Lawrence to-night, dear Anne, listen for the paddle-beats far up the river. I and my Indian will ply the blades as never before, since that frail canoe takes me nearer to the realisation of my hopes. To-night I must leave you. When shall I see you again?"

"Oh, Robert, how can I let you go! I know not nor do you into what dangers you will run. How know I that you will ever

come to me again?"

"Can you doubt, dear heart? That kind fate which has lessened my disappointment by giving you to me could not be so cruel as to separate us thus. You are right in saying that I know not into what dangers I may run; you are right in wondering when the time will come again for me to gaze into your eyes and see there all that the world holds dear for me; but you are wrong if in your heart there rests one doubt that that sweet time will not surely come. This certainty will guide my footsteps in safe courses, and will bring me back to you."

"God grant it, Robert! You have taught me happiness; now you must teach me strength!"

Dusk had hardly settled over the landscape when a small canoe containing two men shot [91]

out under the Rock of Quebec and into the river. In the swarthy visage at the bow one could note no change in expression over that which it had worn a month before, when the canoe had first been beached at Quebec; but in the face of the other, looking back at the dimly outlined figure high above him, was to be seen more than determination, more than confidence, more than courage. One might have discovered there the three combined, made strong and beautiful by the love-light which illumined from within.



HE MORNING OF JULY 6, 1669, proved dark and dismal, and the nature of the elements was reflected in the aspect of the small company of twenty-four men who embarked in their seven canoes

from the shore of Robert Cavelier's seigniory at La Chine. It was evident that the Sulpitians had been enlisted with little previous knowledge and with less preparation, as Dollier de Casson was the only one amongst them all who wore even a semblance of enthusiasm. Piskaret was expressionless, as always, and Robert was biding his time. He had too much in his mind at this moment to do more than make sure that the canoes contained the ill-sorted company whose services he had been able to purchase, - a sad contrast to the "bold and intrepid spirits" his imagination had pictured, - and the meagre supplies with which the expedition was equipped. His way was clearing before him. It might

not come to-day nor to-morrow, but in the time which had elapsed since he had returned from Quebec he had learned how little discipline Dollier had been able to introduce into his half of the company. It would not take much to persuade them at some point that their efforts could be better directed in some other direction than in trying to discover new countries.

This was his hope, also coupled with a doubt: could he be more successful than Dollier in holding his own company together? Of Piskaret he was as sure as of himself, but the other men were mere adventurers,—the scum of the settlement,—useful in case of encounters with the Indians, but absolutely untrustworthy unless it suited their fancy to be loyal to the man in whose pay they were. Still, if worst came to worst, Robert argued to himself, he and Piskaret alone would plunge on and take their chances of discovering the great Ohio and the passage to the Southern Sea.

The little flotilla was led by two canoes filled with Seneca Indians who were returning to their homes. Day after day passed with nothing to break the monotony, the men paddling or carrying their canoes until darkness fell, and then bivouacking upon the shores. The food consisted almost wholly of Indian corn, which the men crushed between stones

and boiled with meat or fish for seasoning when either could be obtained. Life at Montreal, with all its vicissitudes, had never been so severe as this, and when Lake Ontario was reached on the second of August, Robert, Dollier, and Piskaret were the only members of the combined company who did not suffer from some malady or other. The priests suffered even more than the others, as they were forced to listen to the unrestrained cursing of Robert's men, who spared no words in expressing their disgust with affairs in general and with the priests in particular, to whose presence they insisted on attributing their misfortunes.

In spite of this, however, Robert and Dollier still possessed sufficient control over their followers to persuade them to continue their expedition; and on they pushed, with sufferings and privations increasing as they advanced, until seven days later Irondequoit Bay lay before them. Here they met a party of Seneca Indians who came to meet their returning brothers, and who gave many evidences of friendship. They invited the white men to visit their villages, some fifteen or twenty miles distant, and Piskaret strongly urged Robert to accept this invitation, as it was in a direct line to the upper waters of the Ohio, and guides might be found there to conduct them further along their jour-

ney. The priests and the men stoutly refused to make this apparent departure from their route, but Robert prevailed upon Dollier to guard the canoes and stores while he and Piskaret, accompanied by the entire band of Indians, set out at daybreak for the principal village of the Senecas.

Before evening their destination was reached, and Robert saw before him a rude stockade completely surrounding perhaps a hundred and fifty small, filthy bark huts which made up the village. The strangers were received by a band of old men seated upon the grass, the oldest and feeblest of whom received them with a long discourse. When once within the enclosure, they found themselves surrounded by a crowd of curious savages, many of whom had never before seen a living white man. largest of the bark huts was hospitably set aside for Robert and Piskaret, and here they received new evidences of apparent good-will. Children brought in pumpkins and berries, and feasts were provided at which the visitors were sumptuously regaled upon dog-flesh and maize.

Robert was greatly interested in the novelty of their reception, and felt much encouraged by the many tokens of friendship; but Piskaret was wary. Robert was not "Onontio," he argued, yet the Indians were lavishing upon him all the

favours in their power. Piskaret was an Indian himself, and he knew well that a purpose lay behind the unusual efforts made by the savages; so both he and Robert were on their guard against sudden treachery.

In the meantime darkness had settled over the village, relieved only by the glare of the great fires which the savages had built in the open enclosure around which the rude huts were erected. Preparations were evidently on foot for some great ceremony, for the whole tribe men, women, and children — were gliding about like spectral demons, placing fagots near the blazing fires, filling various dishes and cooking utensils with water, and breaking the stillness of the night with their guttural cries of excitement. Robert and Piskaret watched every movement, but to the white man observation brought no enlightenment.

"What means all this mysterious preparation?" demanded Robert of his silent com-

panion.

"It is the 'Ononhara,' the 'Dream Feast,'" answered Piskaret; "they will cast out the evil spirits from the village."

"Perchance this may include us," suggested

Robert.

Before Piskaret could answer the festival began. Every living being in the village save the [97]

visitors seemed seized with a sudden madness. Hither and thither they rushed, shrieking and giving unearthly howls, lighting the fagots and throwing the burning brands in every direction, upsetting everything that came in their way, striking their friends and neighbours, or drenching them with water. Every license seemed granted for the time being, and not a few of the revelers took advantage of the opportunity to satisfy personal rivalries and enmities.

Suddenly the scene changed. Some of the pretended madmen directed their footsteps from hut to hut, calling each owner by name and demanding from him some secret object, the want of which had been revealed in a dream. The person to whom the demand was addressed immediately threw at the applicant any object which chanced to be near at hand, a pipe, a kettle, a tomahawk, — and this procedure continued until at last the desired object was obtained. A cry of delight announced this fact, and the recipient dropped out of the procession. Those who failed to receive the objects of their dreams became much dejected, as this was a warning that misfortune was near at hand.

How long the festival would have continued but for an interruption, Robert never knew. Of a sudden the noise ceased, the feigned mad-

ness was thrown aside, and the savages rushed to the entrance of the stockade to welcome a returning war-party. Silently the newcomers entered the enclosure, bringing with them a number of prisoners, who were received with evidences of great delight. The warriors seated themselves on the grass around the fires, and the prisoners were led away to an adjoining hut.

Soon two Senecas appeared bearing between them a heavy post, which was set up near the largest of the fires. The entire tribe gathered about to witness the proceedings. Robert and Piskaret were apparently forgotten, but no movement escaped their eager gaze.

"Burn prisoner!" exclaimed Piskaret.

Presently the two Indians who had erected the post again appeared, leading a stalwart brave whose arms were tied behind him. The savages about the fire gave a fierce cry of delight as the prisoner was quickly bound to the stake, and the fagots piled up at his feet. The face of the victim was perfectly passive, and he accepted the situation with apparent indifference. The squaws and the children crowded about him to watch his contortions as the tortures progressed. His hands were now freed, and he instantly raised them in an attitude of prayer.

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"A Christian Indian!" whispered Robert to Piskaret. "Will they dare to burn him?"

"They burn us next!" answered Piskaret.
"No friendship Indians when Christians burn.
Come!"

Piskaret led the way stealthily from the entrance of the hut into the gloom beyond the light shed by the ever-increasing flames. Little by little they worked their way around the crowd of Indians, who were now intently engrossed in the spectacle before them, until they nearly reached the entrance to the stockade. Here they paused, crouched in the underbrush, as two savages were standing between them and the opening beyond.

By this time the wood around the prisoner was lighted and the flames scorched his naked body. Not a muscle moved, and his eyes met those of his persecutors fearlessly. The crowd yelled with delight. Here was no white-heart who would die easily,—there was rare sport ahead. The flames mounted high and would end the agony too soon, so water was dashed upon the fire that the entertainment might be prolonged. Part of the water splashed over the victim, and wetting his hand he reached over and baptised a child standing near, who shrank from his touch as if he had been a leper. This was a suggestion for a new torture. A kettle

was quickly swung across the fire, and water heated until it boiled. Then it was slowly poured over the head and shoulders of the prisoner.

"We baptise you," they shouted, "that you may be happy in Heaven. Your fathers tell us that the more one suffers on earth, the happier he is in Heaven. We wish to make you happy, and we torture you because we love you!"

Three tomahawks had meanwhile been heated red-hot in the embers, and these were slung about the victim's neck as a collar: but he met his tormentors with the same unflinching gaze. He showed no sign of collapse other than an increasing weakness. The savages grew impatient. One threw a tomahawk with such unerring aim that it carried with it the prisoner's right ear; but the next trial was less accurate. Instead of just grazing his head the sharp blade buried itself in the prisoner's skull, and his agonies were over. This mishap was greeted with a yell of rage, but it did not prevent a rush and a general fight among the strongest of the spectators to secure the victim's scalp, and to tear out his heart to be eaten, that its courage might be imparted to the victors.

The untimely ending of their entertainment left their savage appetite unsatisfied, and they looked about them to find new excitement.

"The white man! The white man!" the shout was raised, and with a common impulse a rush was made for the hut where Robert and Piskaret had been but a few moments before.

"Come, quick!" whispered Piskaret, when he saw the new turn of affairs.

With a single bound the two men were at the throats of the guards at the entrance of the stockade. Robert buried his hatchet in the brain of one, while Piskaret strangled the second almost before the attack was realised. Out into the darkness they struck, knowing how much even this slight start would mean to them. Robert kept closely behind the clever Indian, who led the way through the tangled underbrush as if it had been daylight, but soon they heard hideous howls of rage as their escape was discovered and the dead bodies of the guards were found. Piskaret was setting a pace which Robert could hardly match, but it was life or death, and he redoubled his efforts. On, on they pushed, Piskaret doubling on his trail, climbing over rocks, dodging behind trees, wading through brooks, with his eye ever on his furious pursuers, and also upon Robert to make sure that he did not become separated from his friend.

Piskaret's skill in woodcraft served them both in good stead now, and at length the fugitives [102]

succeeded in eluding their pursuers. Both Robert and Piskaret were glad enough of an opportunity to throw themselves upon the ground for a half-hour's rest before continuing their tramp back to Dollier and the party which remained behind with the canoes and the stores. Their arrival filled the priests and the men with intense alarm, as they feared an immediate attack; but as no evidences of this were forthcoming, their apprehensions gradually subsided, and they listened to Robert's story with fierce indignation. The priests rejoiced in the martyrdom of the convert, but the men thirsted for revenge.

Robert's hope of securing a guide from the Senecas had been rudely destroyed, but he persuaded Dollier to continue the expedition along the route originally selected. Again the birch canoes were pushed into the waters of Lake Ontario, and again the little company went forward in its search for empire. Along the southern shore of the lake they skirted, past the mouth of the Niagara, where their ears were greeted with the dull roar of the distant cataract, until late in September they reached the Iroquois colony at Otinawatawa, where they were hospitably received by the natives.

It was necessary to remain here a few days for the sick to recover and to replenish the

stores, and Robert did not fail to improve his opportunity to learn from his hosts all that they knew of the distant Ohio. He was told fascinating tales of the beautiful river, perhaps six weeks' journey distant, which would reward his labours and crown his undertaking with success.

Filled with renewed enthusiasm, Robert hastened his preparations for departure, and the party was about to set out when news came of a most surprising nature. It was reported that a Frenchman had arrived at a neighbouring village from the opposite direction, returning from an expedition of western discovery.

Robert's jealousy was at once aroused, and his heart was filled with misgivings. Had he, after all his plans, been forestalled in the gratification of his ambitions? Who was this stranger, and what part of the western country had he traversed? He could not endure the suspense, so within an hour from the time he received the news, he, with Piskaret, was on his way to interview the newcomer.

In spite of his jealousies Robert could not meet a fellow Frenchman in the heart of this wilderness without a feeling of brotherhood and sympathy, and the greetings exchanged between the two men at the entrance to the stranger's hut, even though they were entirely unknown

to each other, was a cordial one. The supposed rival proved to be Louis Joliet, and Robert was delighted to learn that the stranger had not visited the Golden Country which he had sworn should welcome the tread of his foot before that of any other white man, but was returning from an unsuccessful attempt to discover and explore the copper mines of Lake Superior.

Joliet was a young man of about the same age as Robert, and after the first suspicions were removed the two found themselves much in sympathy. The same adventurous blood ran in the veins of both, the same disregard of dangers and privations, and the same indomitable strength of purpose guided their lives. Joliet was able to give Robert valuable information gained during his own expedition, and he was much interested in Robert's plans, which the latter unfolded without reserve. Robert urged Joliet to join him, but that was impossible, as Talon required his return within a specified period; but Robert's new friend offered to aid him by giving him a trustworthy Indian to act as guide. This was good fortune indeed, and Robert gratefully accepted the offer.

More than that, Joliet offered to assist Robert in hastening the break with the Sulpitians, returning with him to Dollier and the forlorn

priests. He was received eagerly by the downhearted fathers, who were thoroughly discouraged and almost rebellious. Joliet showed them a map which he had made of such parts of the Upper Lakes as he had visited; and he told them at the same time of the Pottawattamies and other tribes in that region who were in grievous need of spiritual instruction. This was more to the priests' liking. They were ready to endure privation and to subject themselves to danger in the battle for souls, but were far less enthusiastic in battling for empire. Their duty had been providentially laid before them, and they urged upon Dollier the necessity of changing their route so that light might be shed upon the heathen.

Robert was rejoiced at the turn which affairs had taken, but feigned opposition, knowing well that this would fan the smouldering fire into flames. Up to this point he had apparently taken little interest in what the stranger had to say, but as soon as he felt that Dollier had sufficiently committed himself, he lost not a moment in widening the breach. Watching his opportunity, Robert intercepted Dollier as he was returning from the shore to his tent.

"A word with you, Master Dollier," said Robert, affably.

"Well?" was the interrogative reply.

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"Surely you are not considering seriously these tales which Master Joliet has told us?"

"I am considering them, certainly, but my

determination has not yet been made."

Robert grew earnest at once. He was silent a moment, as if considering his words. When he spoke it was with unusual deference, which

threw Dollier completely off his guard.

"Master Dollier, you and I have received commissions jointly to control this expedition. You are a soldier, older than I in the experience of the service, yet I have served sufficient time to know that the orders of our superiors cannot be lightly disregarded. You and I left Quebec with a definite purpose and under definite instructions from the Crown, and I grieve to see you influenced by the disloyal desires of a portion of our company."

The words were bitter ones for Dollier to accept, but they were spoken with so much evidence of friendliness that the older man held

back the hot reply.

"Our duty is to our spiritual Father first of all, Master Cavelier, rather than to our earthly

rulers," he said loftily.

"But this is not a religious undertaking," replied Robert, beginning to assume a more determined attitude, "and even were it so, 't would be a reckless thing for us to invade that

territory which the Jesuits from Quebec have already visited and which they claim as their own "

Robert could not have touched upon a more sensitive spot in the heart of the Sulpitian. The ever-increasing jealousy of the weaker for the stronger branch of the Order at once sprang into the foreground, and Dollier's caution vanished. His face was flushed with excitement.

"Think you, Master Cavelier," he replied hotly, "that the Sulpitians will forever accept as the field of their labours the vineyards discarded or overlooked by their brothers at Quebec? Shall we forever stand idly by and watch them reap the harvest and the honour, satisfying ourselves with the chaff which they leave for the wind to blow whither it will? Not so! My determination is fixed, and tomorrow morning we take the path to which the hand of duty points."

"Then you and the priests will go alone! My duty lies to the westward, and I will not be turned from it. If you choose not to follow the orders under which we started out, that is your affair. I shall remain loyal to the Crown!"

"'T is not a question of loyalty, sir," said Dollier, stung by Robert's imputation; "'t is a matter of judgment. Were I satisfied that this

route which I propose would not lead me to the same destination, I might reconsider my determination; but I have no question that the route to the north, which takes us through the country of which Master Joliet tells us, is a more certain path to our goal."

"Be it so, Master Dollier!" replied Robert, with decision. "This is the rock on which we split. The Governor shall pass upon our inter-

pretation when we return."

The priests were gratified by Dollier's decision, but the men of Robert's party looked upon the plan with absolute disgust. Their experiences thus far had been distasteful enough, but the thought of becoming parties to the religious work of the fathers was one which they would not consider for a moment. Had the plan contemplated a return to Montreal, Robert would, have found himself wholly deserted, but as a choice between two evils they stuck to their leader as firmly as the priests supported Dollier.

Here was the crisis to which Robert had so long looked forward. He watched the departure of the Sulpitian portion of his company upon the following day with the utmost joy, and as soon as they were out of hearing he turned gratefully to his new-found friend.

"You have aided me manfully, Master Joliet, [109]

and I only regret that you cannot join me in my expedition. Were you and I together, I believe that all the denizens of this untamed wilderness, beasts or men, could not turn us back!"

"I would I might be with you, Master Cavelier," replied Joliet; "my heart yearns for further adventure rather than to return tamely to Quebec and announce the failure of my work. But on one point I would warn you: I like not the appearance of your men, and I fear more for your safety in their hands than for the dangers of the journey. Watch them well, Master Cavelier, and make them fear you, for treachery from behind is a most dreaded foe."

"I thank you, Master Joliet, for your good advice, and I will heed it well. They are but worthless cut-throats, yet I must needs take these or none at all. I will be watchful, but I fear them not. And now, before you go, I have another favour which I would ask of you in the name of friendship."

Joliet looked at Robert in surprise, seeing him hesitate and his face change colour. Robert recovered himself in a moment, and held out his hand impulsively.

"Master Joliet, in Quebec, whither you are now returning, within the Governor's chateau there is the fairest maid in all New France.

She is Mistress Anne Courcelle, and when I left upon this undertaking she bade me Godspeed and a safe return, that I might claim her as my wife. Will you not seek her out, my friend, and tell her that you left me well and hopeful, and that my love for her abides forever?"

"That I will, friend Cavelier," replied Joliet, heartily. "I will surely find her and give her tidings of you. I thank you for this opportunity to serve you with a commission so agreeable."

With a warm embrace the two friends parted. Robert watched the retreating figure until Joliet had vanished in the distance. For several moments he stood there in silence, still looking in the same direction, as if unconscious that his friend had passed beyond his sight.

What emotions filled his heart? A yearning to return even to rude civilisation and its attending comforts? Surely not. The sturdy spirit of Robert Cavelier longed not for comforts, and the unbroken path into the wilderness offered far greater attractions than that which led back to the settlement. But this same spirit, could it have expressed its longing in words, would have told of a fair, smiling face which looked out from its wealth of chestnut curls, and a slender figure which had waved good-bye to the

youthful but courageous explorer from the Rock of Quebec, as his canoe shot out into the river one summer's night now passed long since. It would have recalled those words which were ever with him: "It will last long, Robert; forever if it must be so." It would have told of a longing, but also of a satisfied happiness; of a loneliness, but of an inspired certainty; of a fearfulness, but of a renewed determination.

Before long, however, Robert was brought back to the realities confronting him. It was Piskaret who disturbed his reveries.

"The coyote and the bear lie not down together," said the red man, significantly; "the coyote will bite the heels of the bear no longer."

Robert smiled at the simile.

"Right you are, my Piskaret," he answered, his spirits rising as he realised that he was at last rid of his unpleasant companions; "the bear is now free to hunt his own quarry, and in his own way. Where are the men now?"

"Talking together beyond the big fire. Bad men, — worse than priests, worse than Indians."

Piskaret was unusually communicative.

"I know it all too well," replied Robert, with a sigh; "perhaps my troubles have but just begun. We know our danger, at all events, and will guard against surprise, but after that

we have no other choice than to let these villains do their worst."

Silently they returned to the camp. The men ceased talking instantly upon Robert's approach, and moved about in surly fashion, endeavouring to hide for the time being their all too evident hostility. Robert appeared to take no notice of their rebellious attitude, and ordered preparations to be made for the meagre midday meal. After this he called his men about him. He would make one last appeal for their loyalty and support, and then he would accept the inevitable.

"Comrades," he said, "we have journeyed thus far upon our expedition through many perils and privations. I know what you have suffered, for I have endured all with you. We have yet other obstacles to overcome before we reach our goal, but is it not worth all the sacrifice, knowing that at the end we shall win the admiration of our friends and the gratitude of our King?"

"Much good this will do those of us whose carcasses are left behind as food for the beasts," growled one of the men.

Robert glanced about him. It was easy to see that the sentiment just expressed by the man was unanimously shared by his companions. Robert could not conceal his disgust.

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"Am I the leader of a band of cowards?" he cried. "Ay! I mean it and repeat it!" as the angry men started forward at his words. "Such cowards you are that I and my Indian, single-handed though we be, fear you not with all your strength of numbers!"

Robert's bearing completely intimidated his mutinous company. Brute strength ever admires and fears intellectual courage. These men had seen Robert's fearlessness tested many times, and knew well that behind the penetrating eyes which faced them without a quiver was a spirit fully matching the spoken challenge.

"Now listen to what I have to say. You have shown me how little I can depend upon you, and I shall therefore act accordingly. Up to this time I have made myself one of you; now all is changed. From this time on I am the master, and you will respect my commands or pay the penalty. I shall do no talking, shall give no order twice; but the first man who shows signs of insubordination I will shoot down like a dog! Now get you to your work and heed well what I have spoken."

Robert touched his pistol significantly, and then led the way to the canoes, directing the work of loading the stores and of getting off. But four canoes were left, now that the party was divided, so the matter of preparation was

not a lengthy one. Robert, Piskaret, and the Indian guide went in the first canoe, and the three other canoes followed in ominous silence.

The journey continued with the monotony which had characterised its earlier portion. Lake Ontario lay behind them, and the frail canoes were now borne upon the waters of Lake Erie. Robert and Piskaret accepted the conditions by day and by night, but the men showed plainly that fear alone held them within bounds, and that the time was near at hand when their pent-up fury would burst its bounds.

On the fourth night after leaving Lake Ontario the little party were bivouacked upon the shores of Lake Erie. The frost in the air made the great fire which they built a necessity even to their comparative comfort. Robert knew that he could hold his grip upon his company but little longer, and his watchfulness increased. He was convinced that on this particular night the crisis was at hand.

"One of us must keep awake to-night," said he, quietly, to Piskaret, "or there may be no awakening for either of us to-morrow!"

To all outward appearances the party retired for the night as usual. Robert, though feigning sleep, was on the alert, but toward morning Piskaret relieved him, and he sank into the

rest of exhaustion. Hardly had he done so when Piskaret aroused him hastily.

"Quick! follow me!"

Too dazed to realise fully what was meant, he followed Piskaret blindly. Noiselessly the two men stole to the shore of the lake, and Piskaret motioned Robert to get into one of the canoes. The Indian pushed off quietly and still-paddled a few yards away from the shore, where the darkness completely hid them although they could clearly see all that occurred in camp by the light of the smouldering fire.

Robert was fully awake by this time, and he watched the scene before him with intense interest. All the men were up and about, but were moving with the utmost caution. Their leader was the fellow who answered Robert so insolently at Otinawatawa. He was brave enough now. Twelve against two, and the two supposed to be asleep, should be sufficient odds to enable any coward to make a show of bravery.

Their plans were evidently matured, for they crept noiselessly to the spot which Robert and Piskaret had just left. The situation was an intense one, but Robert could not repress a smile at the expressions of dismay with which the men looked at each other when they discovered

that their victims had escaped, and the cries of rage with which they expressed their chagrin. There was but one thing for them to do, and all seemed to think of it at the same moment. With a mad rush they ran to the three remaining canoes and hastily pushed off into the darkness.

Robert and Piskaret remained silent until the paddle-beats could no longer be heard. Suddenly Robert bethought himself of the provisions.

"The wretches!" he cried. "They have taken all our stores with them. We are indeed left

in sorry plight."

"Piskaret has stores," answered the Indian, quietly, as he paddled back to camp. "Stores all safe. Put in bushes while white men talked!"

Leading the way to a dense underbrush, Piskaret showed Robert that he had removed the provisions from the canoes, and that it was the deserting party which needed to look to itself.

"You are indeed a company in yourself, my Piskaret," said Robert, gratefully. "You and I alone are left, as we thought might be the case, but verily I believe we are stronger now than ever since we left La Chine. The West is yet before us, and it is for us to learn its secrets."

A footstep caused both men to spring to their feet in alarm, but a glance showed that they had no cause for apprehension. It was the guide Joliet had given Robert, who had been entirely forgotten in the excitement of the moment. He had wisely kept out of the way while the trouble was brewing, but now returned to fulfil his duties. Robert welcomed him with delight.

"Master Joliet knew you well, my friend, when he gave you to me. You are now one of us, and I will trust you as I trust my faithful Piskaret."

The darkness was giving way to dawn as the three men again lay down upon the ground to complete their interrupted rest. One might have thought that the episode just ended would have been a crushing blow to Robert's expectations of continuing his expedition, but this thought had not yet come to him. On the contrary, he felt that his way was rapidly clearing before him. Dollier and the Sulpitians had formed an obstacle to the accomplishment of his purpose; they had voluntarily removed themselves from his path. His rebellious soldiers had become another obstacle; they too had taken themselves off, and he was freed from the annoyance and danger of their mutinous The little company was now reduced

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to three, yet Robert's confidence in his ultimate success was never greater. A lack of judgment, say you? Truly, but no lack of courage. You think it recklessness rather than bravery? Yes; but is not recklessness a component part of all heroism? The Spartans at Thermopylæ were reckless, yet history points to their deed as an example of sublime self-sacrifice. They waited in that pass for the dawn to break upon known danger. Does it require less heroism to await those dangers which are unknown?



CHAPTER VIII. THE HEROINE DISCOVERS AN'ALLY





HILE ROBERT AND
Dollier were experiencing
their various adventures,
affairs had not been stagnant
at Quebec. The settlers had
been busily engaged in collecting and shipping to

France the skins of the mink, the beaver, the otter, the silver fox, and the sable, which the country so plentifully supplied; the soldiers of the Carignan regiment had made their usual excursions against the hostile Indians; and in the chateau matters of state had undergone so many changes that now they were assuming complicated proportions. Governor Courcelle's relations with the Intendant had not been improved by the latter's attitude toward Robert at the time his petition was presented, especially after the devoted father discovered how deeply interested his daughter had become in the fortunes of the young explorer.

Anne could not conceal her feelings from the Governor's penetrating glance; and when her

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great secret was once discovered she did not hesitate to tell her father all the petty details of the conspiracy, as known to Robert and herself, in which he had been made an unwitting tool. The soldier was rapidly replacing the governor in the old man's bearing toward Monsieur Talon, and the Intendant was not pleased to note the change. Feeling secure in his position, however, both with the King and with the Jesuits, Talon undertook to ignore the altered conditions, the result being that stormy interviews between the two men came to be matters of daily occurrence.

One evening after supper Anne was walking in the garden with her father, her hand resting lightly upon his arm, the two engaged in serious conversation.

"How comes it, my daughter, that this stranger could win your heart in so brief a space? Methinks it would not have been amiss had he but told me of his leanings."

"Oh, father, I would that you could know him as I do! His is the bravest heart, yet the tenderest. I cannot tell you how it came about, but as he told me of his plans and hopes and beliefs, I felt that they, too, were mine; and later, when we came to know each other better, and he told me all about his boyhood, of the neglect of his father, and of his brother, of

the unhappiness of his life at the House of the Novices, and of the persecution of the Jesuits, I could not help thinking of your persecution, wondering if this was the lot of all men. Robert did not force the story on me, father; I felt myself impelled to ask it of him, — and he told it all so modestly yet so manfully that I grew to like him mightily."

Anne rested her cheek upon her father's arm

as she ceased speaking.

"I see you did, my daughter. I grant you that if Master Cavelier prove as successful in his later quests as in the present one, our King will find in him a valued servant."

"Jest not, father dear," Anne interrupted seriously. "I cannot make you see him as he is. He will not claim me until he has kept his word with you, and that is why I fear the presence of the Jesuits in his party. Oh, father, if aught befall him now my heart will break!"

The tears welled up in Anne's brown eyes,

and her father hastened to console her.

"Tut, tut, my child; dry your eyes. You are a soldier's daughter, and tears become you not. You know full well that I will never stand between you and the man you love, if he but show himself worthy of you. But surely you cannot think it strange that some little jealousy creeps into my heart to know that from this time on I

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must share you with another. Your happiness is all I ask, my child, and you may trust me. Eighteen years have passed since your dear mother placed you in my arms and bade me watch over you in her stead, and all these years you have comforted me in my loneliness. Be patient, daughter, with an old man's weakness."

Anne's arms were clasped tight about her father's neck, and her soft cheek nestled close

to his weather-beaten face.

"Father, darling, you will break my heart! Can you think that I should love you less because of this new love which fills my life with happiness? Ah, you do me wrong! Say rather that the new love has made more real the old one that can never change. You have been both mother and father to me all these years, and I have loved you, and I love you still, with all my heart. Say not that you are jealous, but that you will share my happiness."

"You are right, child. "T was but a moment's weakness. I will rejoice with you, and pray God that Master Cavelier prove a fit hus-

band for my little maid."

The soldier on guard clanked in, interrupting the conversation.

"Master Joliet is within, waiting to see your Excellency."

"Bid him join us here," replied the Governor. Louis Joliet quickly responded to the summons, and made a low obeisance as he was

presented to the Governor's daughter.

"Well met, Mistress Courcelle," said Joliet, as he bowed. "By your father's leave I will first deliver to you a message with which I

have been charged."

"For me?" asked Anne, incredulously.

"For you," replied Joliet, gravely, "if your

father will permit."

"Right willingly, Master Joliet," said Courcelle, quite as puzzled as was Anne. "Proceed, I pray you. You have just returned from your investigation at Superior?"

"Yes, Excellency, an hour ago. But before I tell you of this, I would say to Mistress Courcelle that one Robert Cavelier, whom I by chance met upon the shores of Ontario, bade me bring to her his greeting and his pledge."

"Robert! You have seen Robert?"

"Yes, but six weeks back. May I speak freely, sir, without offence?" Joliet turned to Courcelle for his consent.

"Speak freely, sir. I understand you not."

"I thank you, sir. Master Cavelier had not progressed favourably with Master Dollier and the Sulpitians, and when I met him he was sore distressed. I told him of mine own adven-

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tures, and he related his to me. The Jesuits were not in sympathy with the expedition, and at Ontario they left him, themselves continuing to the northward."

"The priests continued upon the expedition by another route, say you?" asked Governor Courcelle.

"Not so, Excellency; they abandoned the expedition that they might convert the Indians upon the Upper Lakes."

"But what of their commission of discovery?"

"So Master Cavelier asked of them, but they asserted that they recognised no earthly ruler when their faith called them."

Joliet studied the Governor carefully, and was gratified to see that his words produced the desired effect. He did not know how fully what he said confirmed the suspicions which Anne had so recently confided to her father.

"Colbert shall hear of this," exclaimed Courcelle, angrily. "Perhaps Monsieur Talon can explain the eagerness of the Jesuits to join Master Cavelier in his long-studied plans. "T was an artifice to prevent a loyal subject from winning honours for his King. Assuredly, Colbert shall hear of this!"

Courcelle walked rapidly around the little circle in the garden until he could no longer [125]

control himself, and then entered the chateau to seek for Talon while his wrath was yet warm. Anne and Joliet were left for the moment by themselves.

"But tell me, Master Joliet," said Anne, her cheeks colouring a little as she spoke, "did you leave Master Cavelier well and in good

spirits?"

"I left him well and happy, Mistress Courcelle; and who would not be both with such a reward awaiting him? He bade me say that the thought of you made hardship a pleasure, and he asks that you be of stout heart against the day of his return."

Anne's face bore telltale marks, but they only added to her charm.

"Master Cavelier must have liked you much, Master Joliet, to tell you what is known to none but my father and us twain. If he thought so well of you, so indeed must I. You have brought me welcome tidings, and I thank you for them."

Joliet bowed to press his lips to the hand

Anne held out.

"I thank you for your compliments, fair Mistress. I would that you and he may ever count me amongst your warmest friends."

Again the conversation in the garden was interrupted, and Joliet was summoned to the

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council-chamber. Anne hardly realised, however, that she was left alone, for her thoughts had been given new food to feed upon. Robert was well and was thinking of her. His hope of being freed from the Sulpitians in the expedition was already realised: this much she now knew. Robert would persevere and would win success, — of this she was equally sure.

Ah! Woman's faith! What deeds would yet remain unaccomplished but for thy firm, unquenchable blaze! Theory cannot change thee, rumour is powerless against thee, even fact recognises thy power. Long mayst thou preserve thy unchangeableness, that thou mayst prompt men to deeds still greater in time to come!



CHAPTER IX
THE EXPLORER

FINDS NOT THAT

FOR WHICH

HE · SEEKS





OUR YEARS HAD passed since that eventful night when Robert, Piskaret, and the guide whom Joliet left with them had sought rest after the exciting episode of the mutiny, — four years

of arduous labour, of physical hardships, of unwavering perseverance, of undaunted confidence in his undertaking, Through trackless forests Robert and his companions had cut their way; against hostile traders and more hostile priests the explorer's diplomacy had held its own; face to face with treacherous savages the trio had matched sagacity against cunning and won the game; with his passage barred by ice and floods Robert had pushed on and on, surmounting all obstacles by his indomitable will, until the valley of the Ohio and the verdant plains of the Illinois lay before him.

Here he must stop. He had accomplished much and learned more, but to venture further

toward the great river which was his goal could result only in disaster with so small a company. His ambition had been fired rather than subdued by his experiences. He had found the way, and now he might return to Quebec with accurate information at his disposal instead of the hopes and expectations which he had previously laid before the Governor and the Intendant. Surely he could now gather together a goodly company to lead into the glorious valley of the Mississippi.

And why was it not possible to return to Quebec, if even to remain there a few months while making preparations for the accomplishment of his final triumph? And while in Quebec could he not make sweet Anne Courcelle his wife? Ah, Robert, now we learn the truth! The ice, the floods, the traders, the priests, the savages, —ay, even the wilderness itself could not make you turn your face to the right or to the left; but a pair of deep brown eyes and a bewitching little maid can make your philosophy seem even reasonable!

So it was that four long years after Master Robert Cavelier had left the shores of fair La Chine, together with Master Dollier and a motley company of priests and vagabonds, this same Master Cavelier returned to Quebec alone save for two swarthy Indians who seemed his shad-

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ows on right and left. And, strange to say, our bold explorer, after leaving his companions in the Lower Town, paused not until he reached the bastion gate of the Governor's chateau.

Robert's heart beat hard as he presented himself at the entrance and asked an audience with the Governor. His mind unconsciously went back to that afternoon when he had first waited before the stone-bound door, little knowing that within he would find that for which he had not sought, yet that for which he would not now exchange a kingdom. Four years of waiting, all concentrated in the few moments he stood there, made the slight delay in the return of the soldier on guard seem interminable; but at last the suspense ended and Robert was shown into the same dark, low-ceiled room in which he had fought his silent inward battle against Monsieur Talon and the Jesuits.

Robert himself could hardly fail to realise what a change the years had wrought in him. When he left that room before, it was with high ambitions, with youthful enthusiasm, with untested confidence. To-day he stood there tried as by fire, with the calm outward demeanour which experience alone can bring. His heart throbbed loudly, it is true, but his eye was firm, and he breathed self-reliance.

After a few moments' waiting a tall, stalwart

man entered the room. Robert started forward, but as quickly recovered himself.

"You wished to see me?" the man asked.

"Nay," answered Robert, "'t was the Governor whom I sought."

"I am the Governor," replied the stranger, in

surprise, "and who may you be, sir?"

"You are the Governor!" repeated Robert, slowly, putting his hand to his head in bewilderment; "and what of Monsieur Courcelle, sir?"

"Monsieur Courcelle was recalled to France some twelve months since; and I, the Comte de Frontenac, have the honour to serve in his stead."

Robert bowed low, hiding his intense disap-

pointment.

"I crave indulgence, sir; I am Robert Cavelier, who left Montreal four years ago on a journey of exploration under letters-patent from Monsieur Courcelle. And his daughter, sir,—did she return to France with him?"

"Ay, Master Cavelier, Monsieur Courcelle and his daughter, Mistress Anne, left Quebec a year ago, and reached Paris in safety, as I know from news returned from there."

"I thank you, sir. "T is sudden news to me. I had not thought except to find him here."

"But what of you?" asked Frontenac. "You have come to make report of your enterprise?

Then tell me of it. Did you not set out with Master Dollier and the Sulpitians?"

" Ay, sir."

It was a mighty struggle, but by this time Robert had himself well in hand.

"Dollier and the Sulpitians returned some two years since, reporting you dead, as I recall from the records."

"They knew not of me, sir, from the time when they left me and my party at Ontario to continue by ourselves. I will gladly tell your Excellency the details of the expedition."

The present situation was one which Robert had not even dimly imagined. He was aware, before his departure, of the constant quarreling between Courcelle and Talon, but he could not have foreseen that the final outcome of this would be so momentous in its bearing upon himself.

Louis de Buade, the Comte de Frontenac, replaced Courcelle and Talon in 1672, a year before Robert's return, and he had already succeeded in making his impress upon the settlement. Tall, powerful in build, fiery in temper, and fearless in action, he was not a man to be trifled with; yet in his heart, when once that heart was reached, might be found true sympathy and human kindness. His resourceful mind and quick intellect enabled him

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to meet the constantly conflicting questions which arose in New France with great diplomacy and firmness, with the result that he won friends equally among the settlers and the savages. The Jesuits alone were hostile, though secretly so, for with the new Governor at the head of State their temporal influence was seriously checked.

Frontenac's life was full of romance and excitement. His father held a prominent position in the household of Louis XIII., and when the future soldier was born the King became his godfather and bestowed his own name upon him. While still a child, the youthful Louis de Buade showed an unconquerable passion for war, and was sent to Holland to serve under the Prince of Orange. During the next ten years he fought at Hesdin, Arras, Aire, Callioure, Perpignan, Orbitello, and in the Italian campaign, rising in that time to the rank of brigadier-general. Then he returned to Paris and entered Court life. His impetuosity in love was no less than in war, and after causing havoc in the hearts of half the ladies of the palace, he was hastily and secretly married to Anne de la Grange Trianon, whose temper proved a match even for his own. Frontenac's domestic infelicities became Court gossip, and when in taking out his handkerchief one day

there dropped from his pocket a love-letter from Mademoiselle de Mortemart, the future Madame de Montespan, Louis XIV. saw fit to consider favourably his petition for a foreign post. Frontenac's appointment as Governor of New France freed him, therefore, from the unwelcome society of his wife, and provided him with the income which he sorely needed.

This appointment of Frontenac, however, was a more fortunate event for France than the King realised. The new Governor possessed remarkable fitness for his office. His experience in war, the tact and diplomacy which he had learned at the French Court, his unusually attractive personality, - all combined to make of him an ideal ruler. The Indians looked upon him as their "Great Father," the colonists recognised him as a just and fearless official, and the Jesuits found in him an implacable and dangerous foe. Courcelle had lost by trying to please all factions; Frontenac would please them if he could, but he would please himself first. When the Jesuits finally triumphed over him and effected his recall, France lost its grip upon the New World.

Frontenac was interested in the youthful explorer who stood before him. The evident disappointment which his visitor suffered did not escape his penetrating eye, and he surmised

the situation with considerable exactness. It explained to him why Mistress Anne Courcelle left the bleak shores of Quebec with tears upon her cheeks, and why the old Governor had especially urged that Joliet be sent upon a similar mission of exploration that the fate of Robert Cavelier's party might be ascertained.

As Robert recited the story of his expedition from its beginning, Frontenac could not fail to recognise the plot which the Jesuits had laid to reap whatever benefit might come from his success. Thinking Robert dead, the Sulpitians had not hesitated to put their own interpretation upon the events which had occurred, failing to agree in many important respects with the facts as Robert related them; but Frontenac was sufficiently familiar with the priests' methods to draw his own conclusions. The Governor studied the younger man with unquestioned interest, listening intently until the narrative was brought down to the time of Robert's return.

"I congratulate you, Master Cavelier," said Frontenac, when Robert concluded. "Even though you did not realise the full measure of your hopes, yet you have indeed accomplished much, and it suits my plans to aid you in still greater accomplishments. The King shall know of your efforts in his behalf, and per-

chance some day you may have the opportunity to tell him of them face to face. In the meantime I recommend that you retire for the rest which you need over-much, and return to me two days hence, when I would again talk with you."

Robert left the chateau with mingled feelings of despair and hope. Anne had passed beyond his reach, for the time being at all events, and he must contain himself in patience; but on the other hand his interview with Frontenac showed him that the new Governor was in hearty sympathy with him. With his coöperation Robert felt certain that the way would be opened to him, and had Anne been still in Quebec he would have welcomed the change as one which boded favour to his fortunes. For the present, however, he could but wait as patiently as possible, ever ready to seize the opportunities as they presented themselves.

On the appointed day Robert returned to the chateau in accord with the Governor's instructions. The two men, though widely separated in years, found much in common, and at this interview were sown the seeds of a friendship which lasted as long as Frontenac remained in New France. The Governor rejoiced to find a man in whom he could repose full confidence and to whom he could unburden his mind with

absolute safety. He needed Robert fully as much as Robert needed him. When once possessed of the story of Robert's life, he did not hesitate to announce his own antipathy to the Jesuits and his fixed determination that while he remained governor, he and not they should rule New France.

As time went on, and Frontenac became familiar with Robert's knowledge of Indian life and warfare, the Governor placed him in command of the military company of Quebec. Robert accepted the post eagerly, as it gave him a definite channel into which to divert the growing impatience over his separation from Anne, besides placing him among the most important personages of the colony. The Indians were sufficiently restless at this time to require frequent incursions into the forests in order to impress them with the superior strength of the white man, thus preventing serious outbreaks.

The Jesuits in the meantime had great difficulty in maintaining even seeming passivity under Frontenac's administration. He at once appreciated that their great zealousness in their work among the Indians was in reality a definite effort to control the savages sufficiently to make themselves essential to the safety of the colony. While Courcelle was governo, there was a constant fear that the Indians would be

let loose upon the settlement unless the Jesuits were permitted to participate in the conduct of temporal affairs. Frontenac, to meet this threatened danger, gradually brought the leading chiefs into direct acquaintance with himself, their "Great Father," and even persuaded some of them to send their children to Quebec to be educated.

This was so flagrant an intrusion upon their own territory that the priests could not refrain from making a formal protest. One Easter morning the Abbé Fénelon delivered a discourse in the little church of the Hôtel Dieu at Montreal, which fanned the fire into flames. Speaking of the duties of those who possessed temporal authority, he so obviously directed his comparisons against the Governor that no one could mistake his meaning.

It so happened that Robert Cavelier was at that time visiting his friend, Jacques Le Ber, in Montreal, and he was in the church when the sermon was delivered. He sat near the door, and as the Abbé proceeded, Robert noisily rose to his feet, showing by his disapproving glances and gestures his evident displeasure. As the Abbé, though disconcerted, continued his sermon, Robert angrily left the church.

This action was the direct cause of dividing the colony into two factions, but from this time

Robert stood as the most intimate friend and champion of the Governor. The Jesuits directed their intrigues against them jointly, and the fortunes of the two were the more indissolubly connected thereby. Frontenac's popularity, however, gave him the stronger following, and the fathers were still forced to accept his temporal supremacy, although with evident distaste.

Recognising their need of reinforcements, the Jesuits sent an earnest appeal to France for a larger number of missionaries to be sent to the New World. As a result, a few months later, upon a ship bringing a small number of colonists, there arrived at Quebec a goodly number of priests, ready for service. Robert was away at the time the ship arrived, investigating a reported uprising among the Indians, but he received full details from the Governor upon his return.

On the following day Robert was on his way back to the barracks from the chateau when he saw one of the new arrivals coming toward him. The priest was tall but spare, and he was taking an evident interest in his novel surroundings. Something attracted Robert toward the stranger as the father came in his direction, and he paused for a moment until the new-comer should pass. As he drew near, the priest turned his

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face full upon Robert, and looked at him with a penetrating glance. The recognition was mutual, and both men drew back with a cry of surprise.

"Jean!"

"Robert!"

The priest was the first to recover his composure, and a cynical smile of satisfaction replaced the involuntary expression of surprise.

"So thus it is, my brother, that we meet after these long years! I have sought you far and near since you forced me to take your place in the cell at the House of the Novices in Paris. I had given you up as dead, and hoped it might be thus; but here I find you in this citadel of the Devil, strong in body and proud in bearing. Right glad am I to know where you are, that I may also keep watch over your deeds, and perchance pay up the score which has been standing over-long."

Robert could not resist smiling at the recollections which this meeting with his brother brought back. The episode at the House of the Novices had been almost forgotten, but with the victim of his stratagem now before him the details were forcibly recalled.

"This is indeed an unexpected meeting," replied Robert, still amused by the intense look of hatred upon his brother's face. "I was sorry

to leave you so abruptly when last we parted, and I have been much concerned lest your labours at Rouen were temporarily interrupted. I trust that Father Anselm treated you with due consideration?"

Jean's face was black with rage, and he clenched his hands convulsively.

"So you have come to join the band of labourers in the new vineyards of the Lord!" continued Robert, thoroughly enjoying his brother's discomfiture. "What is to be your part? Will you also make a pretence of converting Indians while striking at the government of Quebec? Think twice, my brother! Frontenac is a worthy foe, and he will not release his hold without a struggle."

"The Devil take you!" cried Jean, almost before his brother had ceased speaking. In another moment he was the priest again, and his words, though threatening, were spoken with the old-time deliberation.

"Your speech is quite in keeping with your new-born confidence, Robert; but do not go too far in your insults to me and to our holy Order. Have you forgotten the curse which the Father Superior laid upon you when you threatened to leave the House of the Novices? Do you think 't was spoken idly? Just so sure as yon setting sun will rise again, and just so

sure as I myself have found you, will the mighty Society of Jesus seek you out to your destruction!"

"So be it, Jean! I can quite believe all that you say. But if aught befall me, the Governor will know well where to place the guilt. I fear neither you nor them, and I defy you both to do your worst!"

Robert pushed by his brother and walked with measured step to his destination. Jean stood for a moment watching his retreating figure, with hatred stamped indelibly upon his face, and then strode angrily away in the direction of the Upper Town.

To Robert this unexpected meeting could not do other than recall the unhappy events of his childhood and youth. As he said, he feared the Jesuits no longer, but they stood to him for all that had been dark in his life. Jean's presence within the restricted limits of the town was certain to be a constant reminder of his past suffering, and undoubtedly his brother would do all in his power to incite the priest-hood still further against him. It was a strange fatality which had brought the two men together again in this far-away part of the world after all those years, but Robert refused to accept it as a catastrophe.

Jean was indeed surprised to find thus unex-

pectedly the object of so long a quest. When the exchange of prisoners at the House of the Novices had been discovered, the Father Superior laid upon him the responsibility of hunting down his erring brother. Jean had earnestly endeavoured to accomplish the task intrusted to him, but was finally obliged to abandon it. Now that he had located the object of his search grown to man's estate, and learned the important position Robert held in the colony as the Governor's closest friend and adviser, he realised that his brother had become a serious menace to the welfare of the Jesuits. He felt that the responsibility was too great for him to bear alone; and thus it was that when the ship which brought him to Quebec returned to France, it bore a long letter from him to the Father Superior, setting forth in full the facts of the unexpected encounter, and asking advice as to further action.

When Robert rehearsed the episode to Frontenac at their next meeting, the Governor was much more concerned than he cared to show. Robert had become to him the most important ally in all the colony, and his friendship for him was deep and sincere. He knew far better than Robert how tireless would be the efforts of the Jesuits in the accomplishment of their threat, and Frontenac was unwilling to take any chances re-

garding his friend's safety. He quickly formed the plan, therefore, of sending Robert to Paris with missives to Colbert and to the King, seeking letters-patent which should give him royal assistance in completing his discoveries. This would remove him for a time from the seat of danger, and should he be successful in obtaining the desired permission, Robert could start upon his expedition immediately upon his return.

Frontenac carefully concealed his real motives from Robert, and had no difficulty in persuading him to undertake the voyage. This was the opportunity for which he had waited, for in France he would again find Anne Courcelle. He eagerly accepted the Governor's suggestion, therefore, and hastened his arrangements so that he could sail upon the ship just ready to return to France.

So it was that Father Jean Cavelier hastily transcribed another letter to the Father Superior, as a postscript to the first, announcing that this same escaped novice, referred to in his earlier epistle, had taken passage upon the ship which bore the letters.



HE EXPERIENCES OF the eight vital years which had elapsed since Robert Cavelier set foot upon the soil of his native France had not been such as to prepare him for the Court life which

he was about to behold in the fulness of its glory. Yet the inheritance of a noble birth ever holds its own, and the gentle qualities which had scarcely before been called into existence easily marked him for the gentleman he was. No one of those who had known Robert in Quebec, save those who understood him best, would have supposed him capable of throwing aside so completely the brusque imperiousness and the colonial bearing which characterised him in the New France, to become a polished courtier in the midst of such gorgeous splendour as that of the Court of Louis XIV.

The King was at the height of his greatness and popularity. Colbert had contributed largely

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to this by his retrenchments in the waste of public moneys and his untiring persecution of dishonest officials who had gained fortunes in the service of his predecessor. But Colbert did not attempt to curtail the expenditures of his extravagant master. The King's demands for recreation were steadily increasing, and Colbert provided the ways and means for his entertainment.

Versailles was becoming more and more attractive to Louis XIV. St. Germain had a shadow over it, in the King's mind. The magnificent forest, the wonderful terrace, the perfection of the location, seemed to all others to make this spot the ideal setting for the Court of such a king. But the others did not remember as did Louis XIV. that it was hither that he had been taken one night many years before, driven from Paris by the troubles of the Fronde; nor did they realise how suggestively the steeple of St. Denis indicated that final burial-place of royalty. The first thought was an insult to his childish majesty; the second, a disagreeable reminder that God alone is great.

St. Germain, then, with all its natural beauties, was abandoned, and Versailles became its rival. This was to be a Paradise in which no single Adam and Eve were to bask in the fulness of the sun or in the gentle rays of the moon, — but rather an Olympian Jove and

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many goddesses. Nor was the Serpent to enter here but once. Art and riches could defeat the barrenness of Old Mother Nature at Versailles, but neither could keep the tempter from entering its confines. Smiles sought to hide jealousy; courtly salutes endeavoured to conceal hatred; fair words tried to mask deception, — but all in vain. Even the seemingly powerful Montespan knew in her heart that her influence was waning, and that she walked upon a smouldering volcano.

Mansard, Levau, and Darbay had already received from the King commissions to prepare plans for the marvelous changes and additions which were to be undertaken. Louis was fairly beside himself with enthusiasm and could think of little else. Colbert must needs plan better than ever before to provide for the unlimited demands upon the public treasury. Colbert must be practical while the King was making his silk purse out of the sow's ear.

Robert presented himself to the Minister promptly upon his arrival, and Colbert found in the story of his mission a pleasant diversion from the monotony of plans and payments. More than this, Frontenac's letters were too strong in their statements as to the value of Robert's services to permit his visit to pass by without proper consideration. If Versailles grew much

larger or much more elaborate in the King's mind, Colbert would surely need to levy upon New France for substantial aid; and "Master Robert Cavelier," so read the letter from Governor Frontenac, "is more capable than anybody else I know in the colony to accomplish every kind of enterprise and discovery which may be intrusted to him." Surely Master Cavelier must receive an audience and be encouraged in his service for the King.

Colbert could not fail to be impressed by the interview he had with Robert. The discovery of the Mississippi interested him as a means of extending the name and influence of France, but Robert's suggestion as to the fur-trade and what it might be made to yield interested him still more.

It was not difficult for Robert to comprehend the situation, and he clearly and boldly outlined his proposition. Forts should be built and invested with French soldiers, trading privileges should be sold and not given away, and the Crown itself should enter into partnership with the traders, reaping the lion's share of the gains. Frontenac himself, as Governor, should be intrusted with the allotment and leasing of territory, which would increase his value to the King and his importance in the Colony. As an example of the possibilities, Robert himself

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proposed to purchase for ten thousand francs a grant in seigniory near Fort Frontenac and to guarantee two-thirds of all the profits to the Crown.

The plan was an attractive one; particularly so, as it permitted the Crown to assume the position of Protector and Benefactor, while at the same time an increased income was assured the royal treasury. The Minister hastened to lay the matter before the King, with the result that Robert was summoned to appear at Versailles.

Louis XIV. was no sluggard. Eight hours out of every day were devoted to affairs of state, and the King's knowledge of conditions and transactions was much more intimate than was generally imagined. Especially was he conversant with what occurred in New France, thanks to the interest inspired by Father La Chaise through Madame de Maintenon, - a source of information of which as yet he had not seen fit to speak to his worthy Minister.

The royal summons commanded Robert to present himself at the grand lever of the King; and although this necessitated covering the fifteen miles between Paris and Versailles before eight o'clock in the morning, Robert found himself in the famous room of the Œil de

Bouf some time in advance of the hour. The brisk ride from Paris, through the Bois de Boulogne, along the Seine, past the hamlets which later became St. Cloud, Sèvres, and Viroflay, filled him with intense interest and anticipation. As he crossed the river at St. Cloud he saw a ship lying at anchor in the stream, and it brought back earlier memories of the time when he was "Jacques Moulin" and a fugitive. If Jean's words were true, he was no less a fugitive now; but he refused to treat the threat with even serious consideration. On he galloped through the long park, grand in its artificial and costly beauty, his horse's hoofs ringing loud upon the heavy stones of the Cour Royale. And now he was within the famous palace, a single wall separating him from his most glorious sovereign!

Already the room was well filled with those most closely associated with the King, awaiting the moment when Monsieur Bontemps, the first valet, should throw open the great door which separated the reception-room from the royal apartments, thus giving the signal that His Majesty was ready to receive the Court. Robert, being unacquainted with the others who awaited the King's pleasure, retired to one of the two large windows overlooking the Cour de Marbre, from which position he could watch

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the late comers, and also keep an interested eye upon what took place within the room.

Standing or sitting about a long table placed between the second and third window-doors leading into the Galerie des Glaces, an animated group was discussing the plans for the additions and extensions to the palace which just now so occupied Louis' attention. Mansard, the chief architect, was explaining in detail the magnificent scheme which he had outlined upon a great sheet of paper spread out upon the table, and which he was about to present to the King for his royal approval. With him were Levau and Darbay, his associates, Le Nôtre and Blondel, who were to assist in the architectural work, Puget, Ceysevox, Girardon, and Desjardins, the sculptors in whose hands this portion of the work was to be placed, and Le Brun and Laguerre, who were to execute and supervise the paintings and the decorations. Standing near the fireplace were Racine and Boileau, discussing literature and poetry. At the window next to that at which Robert stood, so near that he could not avoid overhearing the conversation, were Lulli, the composer, and Bensarade, arranging with Président de Perigny the details of the coming fête. The assemblage was largely made up of representatives of art and

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letters, this being the King's leaning at the moment. The nobility of the Court yielded precedence to them at Versailles, well knowing that Louis' present devotion would be at best short-lived.

But Robert had not been wholly unobserved. Somewhat apart from the animated group discussing Versailles and its improvements was a young man whose bearing marked him as a noble of the highest rank. He had grown weary of the subject which now formed almost the only topic of conversation, and awaited the opening of the door with evident ennui. Glancing around the room, his eye fell upon Robert standing by the window, and the strength of the figure, together with the quiet intensity of the stranger's survey of his surroundings, at once attracted his attention. Impulsively he crossed the room and approached Robert.

"Pardon me, sir," he said; "I note that you are a stranger here, and perchance I can be of service to you. I am Louis-Armand de Bourbon, Prince de Conti; command me, I pray you."

The name was well known to Robert, and the Prince's courtesy most welcome. He needed little encouragement, therefore, to give his new acquaintance a brief but clear idea

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of himself and his errand to the King. The Prince became much interested in the vigorous young man before him, even in the brief time they were together, and he invited Robert to seek him again before his return to Paris.

In the meantime Monsieur Bontemps and the other servants of the King had been performing their daily duties within the royal bedchamber. It was an ample apartment, with large marble mantels between the doors at either end. The front wall of the room was broken by three great windows, which would have flooded the chamber with light save for the heavy Gobelin tapestries drawn across them. In the centre stood the splendid canopied bed which, together with the other furniture, cost Simon Delobel, tapissier, twelve years of labour. On either side of this masterpiece, upon the high walls, hung Raphael's "St. John" and Domenichino's "David." Around the bed a balustrade was placed, within which none might enter save the King and his first valet.

On this particular morning, while Monsieur Bontemps was patiently awaiting the moment when the hands of the clock should reach the hour of eight, that worthy functionary was horrified to see the heavy curtains of the bed suddenly separate, and to hear the voice of

his royal master, showing that he had awakened without assistance.

"Bontemps!"

"Yes, Sire."

"Is it yet eight o'clock?"

"Not yet, Sire; it still lacks seven minutes."

"Never mind; summon the others. I will arise."

The first valet hastened to call in from an antechamber, in which they had awaited this moment, the members of the King's household upon whom the various duties fell. The curtains were drawn aside, the marvelous counterpane adorned with the "Triumph of Venus" was laid back, and Louis solemnly kissed the crucifix which Father La Chaise held out to him. As the white-haired ecclesiastic fell back, the noble courtiers to whom the King's toilet was intrusted took temporary possession of his person; and at nine o'clock exactly, having been dressed, and breakfasted, the King, seated in a large armchair before the fire, was prepared for his grand lever.

One of the great doors leading from the room of the Œil de Bœuf was thrown open, and the King's chamber quickly filled. Robert kept in the background awaiting the proper moment to present himself. Each one upon entering the room bowed low three times and solemnly

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kissed the King's hand. After this ceremony many of the courtiers either again retired to the room of the Œil de Bœuf or gathered in groups in different parts of the chamber. Robert was the last to salute the King, and as he approached him he was much relieved to see Colbert standing near by. The Minister returned Robert's greeting, and presented him to the King.

"This is Monsieur Cavelier, Sire, whom you have summoned in response to Governor Fron-

tenac's request."

"From New France, say you?" asked Louis.

"Yes, Sire; these are the documents."

The King carefully regarded the papers which Colbert handed to him before addressing Robert, giving the latter ample opportunity to remark Louis' incontestable yet manly beauty, both of face and form. His majesty of bearing and kingliness of countenance were not assumed, but were an inalienable part of his personality. No one ever came close to the great King without feeling his genuine imperiousness and the elegance of language and manners which distinguished him above all his nobles.

"You are young to have undergone such adventures as we understand have fallen to your

lot," said the King at last.

"In New France, Sire, there is no youth," replied Robert; "the boy becomes the man so

soon as he can raise a musket to his shoulder and can shout 'God save the King!'"

"Well spoken, Monsieur Cavelier. Right glad are we to know that our infant colony doth breed such offspring. And are you certain of the facts which Colbert has presented us regarding your projects in our behalf?"

"Quite certain, Sire. His Excellency the

Governor also certifies my statements."

"Ay, but our friend the Comte de Frontenac doth ever make fair promises, with little in the way of grand accomplishment."

"The Governor, Sire, doth ever work against

great odds."

"Explain your meaning, sir," said the King, quickly.

Robert hesitated. Perhaps he had been too bold. He must be careful of his words now.

"Such obstacles, Sire, as one must ever meet in taming a country even more savage than the Indians themselves."

"Ah! we feared that you had complaints to make against the worthy priests, of whom the Governor often makes mention in his letters to us; and that would surely prove unwelcome. Is it not so, father?" continued the King, referring the question to Père La Chaise, who stood beside him.

"Even so, Your Majesty. Your wisdom

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has discovered how libelous are all attacks against our brethren, who are devoting their life-blood to the salvation of New France."

"I have come to you, Sire," said Robert, hastily, "to speak against no man, but rather to explain more fully than perchance is known here how great the obstacles, yet also how great the possibilities are in this wonderful country across the seas. With a few regiments of soldiers Frontenac could hold for France a vaster empire than France herself, and could restrain England from acquiring territory,—which she will surely do unless vigorously opposed."

"We do not understand that you have come to ask us regiments for Frontenac," observed the King, coldly. "We have present need of soldiers here, and our treasury cannot be endangered until Versailles is complete. You came, we think, to speak of income for the Crown,

and not of outgo."

Robert flushed deeply. Frontenac could look for nothing here, and his cause was being injured rather than improved by the turn the conversation had taken.

"Pardon, Sire; I had no right to speak of this. The limits of my mission are fully laid down within those papers."

"Now you are reasonable again," said Louis,

mollified by Robert's attitude. "And you have hopes of reaching the great river of the Ohio, Monsieur Cavelier, with our assistance?"

"Most surely, Sire. If I may draw upon the soldiers at Quebec I am assured that the greatest river of the New World may be found and held for France."

"And this fur-trade of which you speak,—
is it of sufficient import to warrant our supervision?"

"With proper care, Sire, the fur-trade of New France may be made to yield the Crown a noble income. At present trading-companies are loath to tell how great their profits are. Were they controlled by royal supervision they might still make rare returns while giving richly to the Crown."

"Your judgment does you credit, Monsieur Cavelier. We will carefully consider your petitions, and Colbert shall report our pleasure

concerning them."

Robert retired from his audience with the King satisfied enough with his own immediate prospects, since he knew that he had touched a vital point in the necessities of the treasury; but he was thoroughly discouraged by the evidence of the hostile powers at work against Frontenac and New France. His heart was sore for his friend whose ultimate defeat he

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could clearly foresee, and for his foster-country, for which he felt a loyal attachment.

Now that his audience with the King was ended, Robert was free to undertake the mission which lay even closer to his heart. Here he was in France, yet apparently Anne was as completely hidden from him as if he had been back in Quebec; and he knew not where to seek her. Robert tried to plan out how best to begin this new undertaking, but he found himself more baffled than he had been even in the midst of the primeval forests.

Suddenly he remembered his meeting with the Prince de Conti, and the generous offer of assistance. Perchance this was the solution. At all events he would make the trial. It was not difficult to locate so important a personage as the Prince, and a half-hour later Robert found himself closeted with him at the palace.

"I little thought to trespass so soon upon your kind offer," said Robert, as he saluted the Prince.

"A better proof that you believed me sincere in making it," answered the Prince, pleasantly. "Did not your project fare well in the King's hands this morning?"

"Entirely so," answered Robert, realising that the Prince would naturally misinterpret the nature of his errand; "His Majesty received

me and my petitions with more favour than I could well have expected, and I look for a successful outcome. In the meantime I come to ask if perchance you can tell me the whereabouts of one Monsieur de Courcelle and of his daughter, Mademoiselle Anne, whom I had the honour to know in New France."

The Prince regarded Robert for a moment with an expression which seemed to question whether or not his visitor was serious; but the eagerness with which Robert awaited his reply settled any doubt in the matter.

"Mademoiselle de Courcelle is at this moment probably not a hundred feet from where you sit, since the apartments of Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans, whose maid of honour she is, adjoin these very rooms."

Robert sprang to his feet in astonishment, unable to control himself. Anne in Versailles, so near to him, when he supposed her at least leagues away! He could scarcely believe his ears. The Prince watched his excitement with evident enjoyment, but his next words brought Robert again to himself.

"You did not tell me this morning all the motives which brought you to France, Monsieur Cavelier."

"I crave your pardon," answered Robert, quite chagrined. "It is true that I have been [160]

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even more anxious to see Mademoiselle de Courcelle than to see the King. You have learned my secret, but I trust that my astonishment at your unexpected words has not caused offence. More than four years have passed since last we met."

"Do you know the lady well, Monsieur?" asked the Prince.

"She is my affianced wife," answered Robert,

simply.

"Then congratulations are surely your due, sir. Mademoiselle de Courcelle is counted among the fairest of the ladies of the Court."

"I thank you more than I can tell for your welcome tidings; and will you place me still further in your debt by telling me how to reach her? I know little of Court requirements, having lived so long amidst other scenes. "T was this service that I came to ask."

"T is a more difficult proposition than you imagine, monsieur, since to-morrow night comes the King's fête, for which every one is making preparation. I fear that you must wait until after this event has taken place; then I will gladly assist you in arranging for the meeting."

The conversation turned upon other topics, and Robert found the Prince eager to learn of the New World and of the adventures through which he himself had passed. His eye flashed

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as his visitor related the story of Frontenac's constant struggles against the Jesuits, — a subject which Robert rightly surmised would interest him.

"He is a brave man," he said, as Robert paused for a moment, "but he is fighting against greater odds than he knows. If Madame de Maintenon holds her present sway over the King, the Jesuits will carry every point. Take to him from me, and accept for yourself, my earnest friendship; and call upon me for any assistance I can render."

The patronage of the Prince de Conti was indeed of value, and Robert accepted the proffered friendship with deep gratitude. He knew well how gratified Frontenac would be to learn of this powerful ally at Court, and was glad to have something to offset the disappointment which a knowledge of general conditions was sure to bring him. When on the following day, therefore, Colbert announced to him that the King had granted his petitions, his political mission became a complete success. He received letters-patent for his explorations, the grand seigniory of Fort Frontenac was bestowed upon him, and in addition to this he found himself elevated to the rank of an untitled noble, with the right to call himself the Sieur de La Salle.

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And Anne was at Versailles! Truly the future seemed bright for Robert Cavelier; and he patiently awaited on that thirty-first of August the coming and the going of the grand *fête*, of which he had heard so much during his brief sojourn in France.



CHAPTER XI THE SIEUR-DE-LA-SALLE FINDS-A-RARE-GEM IN-A-FALSE-SETTING





REPARATIONS FOR the grand *fête* had required months of labour, and Colbert was forced to draw again upon Fouquet's apparently limitless wealth. The only silver lining to the Minister's

cloud was that even a Fouquet must at length be ruined by drafts such as these; and when this happy event was realised, he would have administered justice upon one more of those who had reaped a golden harvest under Mazarin's régime.

At last the long-anticipated day arrived, and the Court assembled in all its gorgeous brilliancy. The festivities began in the morning with a great hunt, when the Queen, with Madame de Montpensier and Mademoiselle d'Alençon, rode in Amazonian costumes; in the afternoon a tournament was held which in magnificence quite surpassed anything of the kind which France had seen. One has but to turn to the "Gazette" of that day to read of the wonderful

cortège of Court ladies, "all admirably equipped and on selected horses, led by Madame, in a most superb vest and seated on a white horse with trappings of brocade sewn with pearls and precious stones. Following the ladies appeared the Sun-King, not less easily recognised by the lofty mien peculiar to him than by his rich Hungarian habit, covered with gold and gems, his helmet with waving plumes, and the spirited horse which seemed prouder of carrying so great a monarch than of its magnificent trappings and its jewelled saddle-cloth." Behind the King came Monsieur his brother in Turkish costume: then followed the Duc d'Enghien in Indian disguise; and behind him might be seen the other noblemen, who formed ten quadrilles.

All the festivities were but an introduction to the grand consummation which was to follow. The King had bent all his energies to make this *fête* one long to be remembered in the history of his reign, and Versailles responded nobly to his demands. It was a dark and starless night as the guests stepped forth from the banquet hall, joining the vast number of courtiers with their ladies who had not been fortunate enough to be invited to the banquet, but who had assembled to join in the later festivities.

Of a sudden a wonderful transformation took place. The circumference of the parterre of

Latona, the grand alley, the terrace, and the front of the palace became decorated with statues, vases, and chandeliers weirdly lighted in such a fashion as to make them glow as if from inward flames. Then the parterres burst into light, and a double row of torches, perhaps two feet apart, illuminated the grand terrace in front of the chateau. Myriads of lights sprang into sight along the steps and railings of the horseshoe, on top of the walls, around the foundations, along the reservoirs and the borders of the grand canal. From Stygian darkness the scene was transformed into a brilliantly-lighted fairy garden.

The King and the Queen led the assemblage down the broad walk to the edge of the grand canal. It was indeed a remarkable gathering. There was the new Duchesse d'Orléans, the Princess Palatine, who was married to the King's brother after the suspicious death of Henrietta of England. Even amidst revels such as these she never forgot nor ceased to long for her beloved Germany, just as Henrietta had longed for the England which she never saw again. There was Mademoiselle de la Vallière, no longer Louis' favourite, but still prominent in Court because of her legitimated daughter, Mademoiselle de Blois, who afterwards became the Princesse de Conti. Her blue eyes always



THE FÊTE AT VERSAILLES

"The King and the Queen led the assemblage down the broad walk to the edge of the grand canal."



showed the effects of weeping now, for although her hair was as fair, her complexion as beautiful, her smile as agreeable, and her look as tender, the King had no thought of her. This fête at Versailles was the song of the dying swan for her. Two months later she retired into the depths of a cloister, where as Sister Louise of Mercy she prayed constantly for the King's conversion.

Gayest among all the royal company was Madame de Montespan. She had won Louis away from La Vallière, and was gallantly endeavouring to prevent the dark cloud gathering upon her horizon from breaking into force. She was taller than the average, with soft, delicate features and sparkling eyes. Her neck was admirably turned, and her golden hair fell in luxuriant tresses upon her beautifully-moulded shoulders. She still played her part well, but she was too clever a diplomat not to know in her heart that it was to Madame de Maintenon, the governess whom she herself had introduced in Court, that Louis now turned for advice and companionship.

The new favourite, who was to hold over the Sun-King the most powerful sway of all in his whole career, and who was to succeed in claiming him as husband as well as lover, walked with a serenity and a dignity only

equalled by the King himself. She was fair in complexion, yet her eyes were black, with a depth which spoke to the heart as no words could ever do. She formed a perfect foil to Montespan's forced vivacity, yet gained by each comparison. She was beautiful, and her features taken one by one showed little to be wished for and nothing with which to find fault, yet it was not her beauty that formed her greatest charm. It was that same dignity in mental as well as in physical poise which forced the King to acknowledge her his most valued counselor. More than this, her absolute though ever courteous indifference, feigned or real as it may have been, held Louis' devotion as no effort of any other favourite had ever done.

These were the personages most observed as the banqueting party proceeded to the grand canal and embarked in richly-decorated gondolas. Musicians upon other boats began to play the music which Lulli had composed especially for the occasion. Those who made up the magnificent cortège wandered through the park, or seated themselves at the many tables which had been placed in every available spot of the garden, there to converse among themselves, and to enjoy the enchanting splendour of the scene.

The newly created Sieur de La Salle walked aimlessly through the giddy throng. Here indeed was a striking contrast to the manner of life which even the capital of New France afforded. Robert was dazzled by the scene. but to him it had no greater meaning than a possible opportunity of meeting Anne Courcelle. She would of course attend the fête, and he hoped at least to gain a sight of her. And if he found her, — what then? She had loved him in Quebec, but four years had passed since that time, and how could her heart hold true amidst surroundings such as he now beheld? In New France Mistress Anne Courcelle, even though she was the Governor's daughter, was not so great a lady as was Mademoiselle de Courcelle, maid of honour to the Princess Palatine, at Versailles; and Master Robert Cavelier, even now that he had become the Sieur de La Salle, knew himself to be no more than an adventurer. He was of noble birth, but his past was blotted out when he entered the House of the Novices at Paris; and since then his life had been far removed from courts and splendours. Thus he reasoned, but it was the mind which argued. His heart possessed no doubt. No image other than fair Mistress Anne had ever entered there, and it felt a certainty of similar loyalty in return.

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As Robert strolled leisurely through the park, in and out among the revelers, he was attracted by a gay company of nobles and ladies seated about one of the tables. He drew nearer to them, and in the shadow of a tree regarded them with indifferent interest. The ladies of the party were known to him by sight, but the gallants with them were strangers. There was Mademoiselle de Lenclos, an intimate friend of Madame de Maintenon. Beside her were Mademoiselle de Charente and Mademoiselle de Montalais, two maids of honour to the Princess Palatine. All were entering fully into the festivities, and commented upon the passers-by.

"Recite us a verse, Sir Poet," said Mademoiselle de Montalais at length, turning gaily to

the courtier sitting opposite her.

"Of what shall I sing, fair mistress?" he replied, picking up a guitar which he had unstrung from his shoulder.

"Sing us your verses to Iris; and mind that

you address them to me!"

The courtier struck a chord upon the guitar, and then began, in a low, rich voice:

"
HILST I was with you, every day,
My dove, my blooming fair,
I viewed your charms, I heard your wit,
Regardless of the snare.

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"But from your sight when once debarred,
What tortures I endured!
Too fierce, too violent, alas!
By reason to be cured.

"Parting, which ought to give relief,
But added to my pain;
For in your charms still faster linked,
I struggled still in vain.

"Obdurate Iris! Cruel Fair!
To kindle such a flame;
To make me burn, consume, and long
For what I durst not name.

"Should I my passion once reveal,
Your anger't would procure;
And should I keep the secret close,
My dissolution's sure!"

"Bravo, Sir Poet! Were your verses as good as your wit, or were either as fine as your voice, you would make your fortune as a ballad-singer," said Mademoiselle de Montalais as the singing ceased.

"And now, Sir Gallant, will you own yourself outdone by our dreaming poet here?" she continued, turning to the second courtier, who had been paying more attention to Mademoiselle de Charente than to the song.

¹ Scarron (1660).

"Nay, nay, fair mistress," he replied quickly. "I too have a song to Iris, but 't is shorter, and therefore better."

"Then sing it to us," commanded Mademoiselle de Charente; "and 't is my turn to be the Iris. I will judge between the two."

The new minstrel did not wait for the guitar to accompany him, but at once accepted the challenge:

"THO' reason tells me Womenkind
Are false, inconstant as the wind,
And rocks which men should fly;
Yet Iris has such airs, such graces,
And so divinely fair her face is,
For her I'd freely die." 1

"Ah, would that I were Iris, indeed!" sighed Mademoiselle de Charente, with well-feigned seriousness. "How fair speaks the bard when he addresses the mythical Iris, yet how slow he ever is to compose such speeches when his Iris is before him!"

"Nay, nay, I protest!" exclaimed the singer who had just ceased. "T is ever the lady's fault alone. Had you but seen me try to speak a few words of love to your browneyed companion, Mademoiselle de Courcelle,

¹ Scarron (1660).

but yester-eve, and could you have heard the reproaches laid upon my head by the haughty mistress, I swear you would not wonder if I held my peace forever more!"

Robert started forward, straining his ears to

catch the words of the speaker.

"Have you not learned that Mademoiselle de Courcelle's heart became so congealed in those awful winters of Quebec that it has never yet thawed out?" asked Mademoiselle de Montalais, little pleased that her remark should have turned the conversation upon some one else.

"But seriously, why does she ever hold herself so far aloof from all the others?" continued the courtier. "She smiles at one with bewitching grace, and converses right willingly; but let one so much as breathe a word of love, and she draws back as though a blow were struck her."

Robert listened intently. Could it be that he himself held the answer to that question, and that the simple pledge which had been given him so far across the water kept her thus true to their old-time love? Unconsciously he moved nearer to the group as Mademoiselle de Charente entered into the conversation.

"That is something which makes us all wonder much. I think Madame likes her best

of all her maids, since she finds in her a response to her own unhappiness. Yet never once has one of us discovered Mademoiselle de Courcelle save with a smile upon her lips. There is indeed a mystery in the matter."

Robert lost the rest of the conversation, moving back to his original position lest he be discovered in his eavesdropping. He turned his eyes away from the gay revelers, seeking to picture the fair face which now seemed but a memory. The flickering light of the torches assisted him, for it cast the mental resemblance upon a radiantly-beautiful woman coming toward him. Robert smiled to himself as he became conscious of a resentment which entered his heart; but the smile suddenly van-This was no hallucination! It was Anne herself; but what a change the years and the surroundings had wrought! He had ever thought of her as wearing the simple dress in which she was clad that last day they were together in Quebec; he could not have foreseen that the girl of eighteen would develop into this magnificent woman of twenty-three. The Court dress, the gorgeous environment, the stately, dignified bearing, as she walked past him, leaning upon the arm of a white-haired soldier, bewildered Robert as he started forward and as quickly drew back again into his

retreat, feasting his eyes upon the dear sight before him.

This was no place for the meeting, where all that occurred could be easily observed by those other curious eyes which followed her even as his did. He would wait until they gained some little distance, and then overtake them.

The moments seemed an eternity, but soon Robert stepped quietly out into the broad walk and rapidly gained on the slow pace which Anne and her father were taking. How the old Governor had aged since Robert had seen him! He was almost feeble, yet he bore himself with the same soldierly mien with which Robert was familiar. The young man drew near to them and quietly spoke one word:

"Anne!"

The girl turned quickly, gazing intently at the speaker.

"Anne! Do you not know me?"

She took a step toward him, bewilderment written upon every feature.

"Who are you, sir?" she demanded, her eyes fixed upon his face.

The Governor stepped between them.

"Who are you—" he began, but Robert interrupted him by dropping upon one knee

before him. He would transport them for the moment to Quebec, — back to the old chateau.

"I have come, Excellency, to make report of my explorations in the Valley of the Ohio."

"Robert! Robert! Is it possible that it is you? They told me you were dead. So cruel — so cruel!"

Anne's face plainly showed how keenly she had suffered. She came close to her lover and gazed searchingly at him. His arms were about her, and her head rested for a moment against his shoulder.

"It is you! it is you!" she almost sobbed in her joy. "Oh, Robert, tell me it is you!"

"Can you doubt it, my beloved? It has been a dreary waiting, but this moment is reward enough.

"Sir," Robert continued, turning to the old man, "will you not pardon my presumption? I stole away your dear maid's heart before I left Quebec, and told you not of it."

"Speak not of that, Master Cavelier. My little girl has mourned you long, and glad am I that her heart's devotion need not go unrequited. But how came you here, sir?"

The three resumed the promenade, as others of the guests were seen approaching. Anne walked between the two men, holding close to the arm of each. Her face was radiant with

happiness, yet she seemed to fear lest the present reality should fade away and leave the old sad dream in its place. This was her present; the past was full of sorrow both for her father and for Robert; the future contained for her she knew not what, — but this, her present, was assured, and she held fast to the two great loves of her life as if she feared to let them go.

Robert related to them the main facts concerning the events which had occurred since they separated four years before in Quebec. He told them of his adventurous expedition and its result, of his return to Quebec and the disappointment which awaited him there, of Frontenac and his friendship for him, of his mission to the King, and of his efforts to find Anne. His hearers were full of interest, and often interrupted him with eager questions.

They were able, in their turn, to fill in the facts which Frontenac himself could not supply. Robert learned of the ever-increasing insolence of Talon, and how he had over-reached himself in his final *coup*, which had accomplished his object in that it brought about the recall of Courcelle; but instead of being himself advanced from Intendant to Governor, as he confidently expected, he was recalled to France and retired from public service. Anne told him of

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Dollier's return to Quebec just before they sailed for France, bringing with him the report of Robert's death at the hands of his mutinous soldiers.

This was apparently so well substantiated that Anne felt that the last tie binding her to the New France, which had contained for her so little of happiness and so much of sorrow, was indeed broken, and she was quite ready to accept for herself the recall to France. She knew that her father's career was at an end, and that they must go whither the wind blew them. Her life, she felt, was also ended; for the bright horizon which she and Robert had watched together from the Rock of Quebec had faded in the darkness of night now that their golden dream could not be realised.

Her father's friends were still powerful enough to gain for him the nominal position which provided for his actual necessities, and for Anne herself they were even more fortunate in securing her appointment as maid of honour to Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans, the Princess Palatine. Here both she and the old Governor were as happily situated as they could expect, and both settled down to accept the future, hopeless as it might seem, with that resignation and outward content which mark deep sensibilities.

The hours had run on without notice as Courcelle, Anne, and Robert exchanged these items of news which so vitally concerned them all. They had remained in the less-frequented portions of the park that they might not be disturbed by the gay revelers; and so absorbed were they that they did not notice that the King and his companions had long since deserted the gorgeously-decorated gondolas upon the grand canal; they did not observe that the lights upon the parterres and about the water-ways had been extinguished; nor did they realise that they alone of all the guests had remained, until they saw the first bright rays of dawn appearing in the sky, as if to warn them that they must separate, and to manifest its own supremacy over mortal imitations, - even though these should be the most sumptuous which royalty could command.



CHAPTER XII THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE





HE KING'S FÊTE AT Versailles left memories of varied emotions in the hearts of those who had participated in it. To Anne and to Robert it represented the climax in their happiness;

but to one of those nearer to the King, the extinguishing of the myriads of lights and the overwhelming darkness which succeeded it

seemed to represent her own career.

Madame de Montespan had held King Louis in the hollow of her hand for thirteen years. He had broken with her time and again, but she had always succeeded in winning back his wandering favour. She alone against all the Court had persuaded him to legitimate the children which had been born to them, and this fact, together with her incontestable beauty and extraordinary diplomacy, had until now been enough to enable her to withstand all counterattacks.

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But Louis XIV. had recently known a change in heart. Ever since Mademoiselle de Fontanges, the passing flame which for the moment called the royal lover from the side of Montespan, died in child-bed, the monarch had felt a touch of remorse which he attributed to religion. Father La Chaise seized upon this unexpected turn with characteristic energy, the result being that while Madame de Montespan still maintained her high position at Court, she felt her power to be gradually waning, and knew that it was but a question of weeks, or perhaps only of days, when a new favourite would take her place.

Madame de Montespan had been a favourite "thundering and triumphant," but still she was a woman; and being a woman she was tasting the bitterest dregs of the humiliation of her pride in discovering that her rival in the King's affections was none other than the despised governess of her children, the widow Scarron. The King came to know her while visiting the Duc du Maine and Mademoiselle de Nantes, and he found in the modest, sweet-faced woman, whose inherited nobility ever shone through the homely condition she occupied, a response to the yearning for better things for which his heart now cried.

Françoise d'Aubigné, the future Madame de Maintenon, was a few years older than the other

Françoise, Madame de Montespan. Her father had been a nobleman, a gambler, a bankrupt, an adventurer, and the kindest act which he ever performed for his devoted wife and children was when he died, in 1647. Françoise's mother, unable to provide for both her children, placed her daughter in an Ursuline convent at Niort, where the seeds of religion were carefully sown, and an implacable abhorrence of Protestantism created. This religious fervour became so much a part of her life that even the flippancy of Scarron, whom she married at seventeen, could not shake it: and when her misfortunes placed her in charge of the children of the King and Madame de Montespan, she welcomed it as an opportunity given to her to plant the doctrines of the true and only faith in those who were of the King's blood.

Louis could not help seeing this in his daily contact with his legitimated children, to whom he gave a devotion far in excess of his affection for the Dauphin. The modest governess did not force her goodness or her religion upon him, as did Père La Chaise, and perhaps for that very reason succeeded in impressing him with it when the ecclesiastic had failed. Day after day he visited her apartments, ostensibly to see his children, but in reality that he might converse with their guardian; and little by little he came

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to depend upon her clear-sighted, unhesitating judgment in important matters of state. She personified to him both Wisdom and Virtue, and the combination was sufficiently novel to be interesting.

A few months previous to the *fête* at Versailles, Madame Scarron purchased from her modest earnings, considerably augmented by the King's generosity, the estate of Maintenon, whereupon Louis created her the Marchioness de Maintenon, and thus gave the first official notice to his Court that she enjoyed the royal favour. By her own request she still retained her position as governess of his children, but the King now considered no function to be complete unless she was by his side.

Queen Marie Thérèse, long accustomed to Louis' infidelities, welcomed the new favourite with great rejoicing, for she saw in her the direct cause of the King's pious sentiments, with which came greater kindness and consideration from her husband to herself. Thus it was that when the royal party embarked upon the gorgeously-decorated gondolas that festival-night at Versailles, Madame de Maintenon was with the King and the Queen, while Madame de Montespan was in the second gondola.

In her heart the Montespan knew this to be a just retribution. She herself had supplanted

the once-powerful La Vallière, whose sad face, in still another gondola, was a living reproach to her; she had deserted her husband; she had used the King's favour to advance her own selfish ends; — yet with all this clearly outlined upon her conscience she could not accept even the inevitable without a jealousy and resentment which consumed her very heart.

At five o'clock on the day after the fête Louis made his usual daily visit to Madame de Maintenon's apartments. Perhaps the simplicity of the room as contrasted with the rest of the palace made it an agreeable retreat for him from the ostentatious grandeur which surrounded him elsewhere. The pictures upon the walls were by famous masters, but they were all of religious subjects; the Savonnière carpet was rich in texture but subdued in colouring; the chimney-piece was of magnificent marble, but held no ornament save a clock which ticked away the moments of Montespan's life at Court. Opposite the fireplace were two armchairs, - one for the fair tenant's use, the other reserved for the King; on the other side of the chimney-piece was a red-damask canopied niche in which stood a statue of the Virgin with a light burning before it, and a wooden prie-dieu on the top of which rested a prayer-

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book. On the opposite side of the room was the bed, in an alcove.

Louis found Madame de Maintenon seated in the armchair before the fire, busily employed with her work-basket in her lap. She rose as he entered, and bowed low in giving him a smiling welcome.

"Ever the same smile, Françoise," said the King, sinking into the chair before him. "Whenever I come here and see that smile upon your face, I feel as if I had become a saint myself and were reaping my reward."

"Your reward, Sire, for the good works you have accomplished and will accomplish will be far greater than any in my power to bestow."

The King smiled contentedly.

"Do you really believe that, Françoise? Father La Chaise has preached into my ears from time immemorial that my sins were near past redemption, and yet by your religion you give me hope that perchance it is not yet too late."

"My religion and that of Père La Chaise are the same, Sire. By that saving word 'near' the father has held out the same hope that I would give you. It is by a man's whole work that he is judged, not by a portion of it."

"And does my salvation forbid me to continue war?" asked the King.

Madame de Maintenon paused before reply-

ing.

"I long after peace, Sire," she said at last. "I shall never give the King any counsels prejudicial to his glory; but if he would believe me, he would be less dazzled with this éclat of victory, and would think more seriously of his salvation. But it is not my business to govern the State. I ask God daily to inspire and direct the master, and make him know the truth."

"But surely this salvation cannot forbid my loving you, Françoise, who are the embodiment of religion itself."

Françoise looked at the King steadily.

"Sire, you shame me when you speak thus. Far from being the embodiment, I am amongst the most erring of the faith; and your love, Sire, belongs to the Queen and to the State."

The King regarded her in silence. This was a phase of femininity which he had not before met. La Vallière, Montespan, Fontanges, had

not so spurned his royal affection.

"Ever true to your faith, Françoise," he said finally. "They call the popes 'Your Holiness,' and kings 'Your Majesty;' you, Madame, should be called, 'Your Solidity'!"

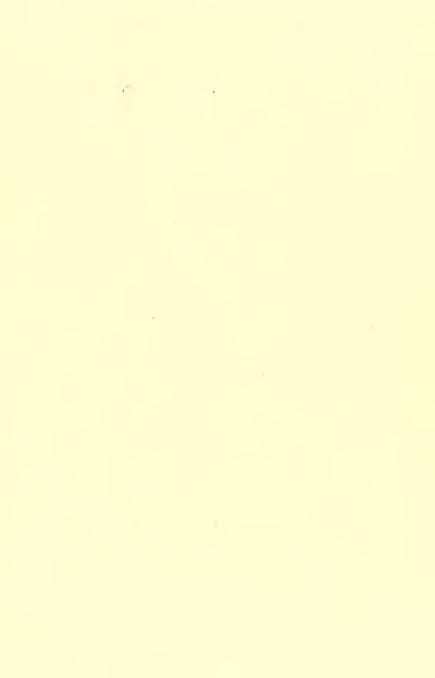
"Let us speak of other things, Sire; I have a

favour to ask of you to-day."



Louis XIV. and Mme. DE Maintenon

"They call the popes 'Your Holiness,' and kings 'Your Majesty.'
You, Madame, should be called 'Your Solidity.'"



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"Name it, Françoise; I grant it before the asking."

"I understand that one Robert Cavelier has recently arrived at Court from New France."

"Well, what of that?"

"I wish to see him, Sire, to learn from him how fares our faith among the Indians. May I see him here?"

"Willingly; but if he speaks the truth you may learn more than you desire. Frontenac does not bless these prelates with unstinted praise, and if I mistake not, young Cavelier is well tainted with the same disease."

"You may be right, Sire, yet I would learn it from his own lips."

The King soon after took his leave, and Madame de Maintenon quickly summoned the captain of the Guard.

"By the King's orders you will request the Sieur de La Salle to come to me at once."

As soon as the captain retired Madame threw herself upon her knees before the *prie-dieu*, and prayed for strength and guidance in the coming interview.

Robert and Anne had made the most of the afternoon of this same day. Relieved from her regular duties by the Princess Palatine's indisposition following the fête, Anne had been able

to spend several hours with Robert in the park so brilliantly illuminated the night before. To the two lovers the spot seemed even more enchanted, as they walked to and fro enjoying to the fullest this unexpected reunion.

"How strange it seems," said Anne at length, "that we should be together here at Versailles. For years and years, before I met you at Quebec, I longed to return to France; but afterwards, when father was recalled, even though I believed you dead, it almost broke my heart to leave those scenes which I had known with you."

"I cannot understand what object Dollier had in reporting me dead," replied Robert. "I

often think of it."

"Simply to conceal the fact that he had separated his party from yours, for he knew that father would be very angry. As it was, he took the position that the disaster which befell you and your companions was due to your own obstinacy and lack of experience, and that had he not changed the route never one of the entire company would have returned alive."

"A pretty artifice!" said Robert, his mind reverting to that scene upon the shore of Lake Ontario. "He evidently took his chances that the facts would sustain his words; and, in faith, there were times when he came near the truth!"

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Anne tightened her hold upon her lover's arm.

"Do not speak so lightly of these things, Robert, I pray you. It recalls all too vividly those awful days after I first received the news. Had it not been for dear father, I could not have stood the blow. I had to live for him, and I nerved myself for the saddened task." T was hard enough before we returned to France, but here it has been harder still."

"Dear, loyal heart," interrupted Robert, "I find myself controlled by feelings which contradict; I grieve to hear how you suffered for me, yet it rejoices me to know that your love ever held so true."

Anne did not heed the interruption. She must free her heart now from the pain which so long had consumed it.

"The life here is all so false that when first I had to enter into it, my whole being rebelled against the seeming mockery. No one could understand that I was not as eager as are all the other maids to have these pompous lackeys kneeling at my feet, pouring out love sonnets and telling me how beautiful I am! Oh, how I loathed it! And all the time my heart was bleeding for a true man's memory!"

"I trust the man proves truer than the memory, Anne," replied Robert, amused in spite

of the seriousness of the conversation; "for if I mistake not, one Robert Cavelier did rudely shatter that illusion by appearing in the flesh!"

Anne was visibly pained that he should jest over what had been a tragedy to her. Robert

hastened to atone.

"Do not think I do not realise your suffering, my beloved, or that I do not appreciate all that you have endured for me. If possible, my love for you has grown because of this great proof which you have given me of it. But how can I grieve with you beside me? How can I dwell upon the sadness of the past when the present contains so much of happiness?"

"You are right, Robert," said Anne, smiling through the tears which came involuntarily as she recalled the sorrow she had passed through, and looking into her lover's face; "you are right: let us enjoy to-day without dimming its

brightness with the pain of yesterday."

The conversation then turned from the past upon the future. The mind is never content to rest more than a moment upon the present, however attractive it may be. Deny it the pleasure of dwelling upon the past, and it will straightway turn upon the future. The past is mellowed by memory and age, the future is of interest because of its uncertainty; but the

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present represents realisation, and is thus of lesser consequence.

"And you will return with me to that New

France which was so unkind to you?"

"Not yet, Robert—not yet," she replied, sadness again tingeing her voice. "I could not leave father now; he is aging fast, and depends so much upon me."

"But need we leave him behind? Will he not go with us, and take up his home in our

home across the seas?"

"Perhaps so," Anne answered quietly, "but it would be hard for him to return to Quebec; it is so full of bitter memories. But I will ask him, and if he will, then I can go. Oh, Robert, can it be possible that we shall be together there again!"

"It is possible," answered Robert, taking her hand in his, "it is possible. We shall be married so soon as your father gains the King's consent, which will be but a formality, and we three will turn our faces toward the new land

where we first learned our happiness."

"God grant it may be so, my Robert, but I feel so fearful that something may yet arise to

make it all impossible."

"T is but the shadow of your long sorrowing," said Robert, reassuringly; "there can be nothing to prevent."

Their conversation was interrupted by the approach of one of the guards, who saluted and spoke to Robert.

"Have I the honour of addressing the Sieur

de La Salle?"

"I am he," answered Robert, surprised.

"By the King's orders you are to attend Madame de Maintenon at once."

The guard again saluted and left them to themselves. Robert looked at Anne inquiringly. The girl's face was pale with apprehension.

"What does this mean?" asked Robert,

alarmed in spite of himself.

"It means that the Jesuits know of your arrival, and that Madame de Maintenon has received an appeal to interest herself against you," answered Anne, with quick intuition.

"But what can they hope to accomplish now?" again questioned Robert. "My business with the King is ended, and it is not possible that he will undo what has already been consummated."

"Anything is possible at Versailles," answered Anne; "but you must hasten. The King's

orders do not brook delay."

Robert proceeded at once to Madame de Maintenon's apartments. Giving his name to the guard at the door, he was admitted, and after gravely saluting her, he regarded the new

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favourite with no little curiosity. Madame motioned him to be seated.

- "You are Robert Cavelier, the Sieur de La Salle?"
 - "Yes, Madame."
- "I have asked the King to permit me to see you, that I may learn from you regarding our missions in the New World, for the welfare of which we are so much concerned."
- "I would gladly tell you of them, Madame, but my labours have been in the service of the King rather than of the Church."

"The service of the Church, sir, is the service of the King," replied Madame de Maintenon, gravely.

Robert rehearsed as fully as possible the more recent news from the missions and of the priests, careful to avoid any criticism that might prove objectionable. When he concluded, Madame questioned him still further.

"And is the Comte de Frontenac of the faith?" she asked, endeavouring to draw him out.

"The Comte de Frontenac respects the work of the missions, and aids it with all his power," answered Robert, evasively.

- "Is he upon good terms with the fathers?"
- "In all that relates to the missions he is on excellent terms with them, Madame."
 - "You seem to qualify your statements not a [193]

little, Sieur de La Salle. I would ask you for further information."

"The Comte de Frontenac is in sympathy with the fathers in their spiritual work, Madame, but opposes their interference in the temporal conduct of the colony."

"Surely insofar as the conduct of temporal affairs bears upon those of the world to come, the Church should take precedence over the State," replied Madame de Maintenon, sternly. "And do you support the Governor, sir?"

"As a servant of the Governor, in the employ of the State and not of the Church, I consider it my duty to support the Governor."

"But do your sympathies stop there, sir? Have you no further feelings against the faith than that of duty to the State?"

Robert was fairly cornered. He could avoid the issue no longer without a subterfuge, and to that he would not stoop.

"You will pardon me, Madame, if I say that I am quite unable to understand what bearing my personal feelings may have upon this matter; but since you ask it, I must admit that the treatment I have received at the hands of the Jesuits has not been such as to win my friendship."

"The bearing of your personal feelings is that you are about to return to New France,

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and I would have you go back as one of them and not against them. If you have aught of which to complain in their treatment of you, it is due to your own shortcomings; for our faith is the true faith and the faith of God."

"What you ask is not possible, Madame; I have suffered too much and too long, and I am too familiar with the tenets of their faith to be able to embrace it."

"But it is necessary that you do so, Sieur de La Salle, for the King will have it so. His Majesty regards the souls of his subjects with even more concern than his own temporal power; and what I ask for myself I command in his name!"

"I cannot accept that command, Madame, and were the King here I must needs tell him the same."

"Then you defy the King, sir?"

"Not so, Madame. The King has no more loyal subject, but no man can know what I know and accept the faith of the Jesuits."

Madame de Maintenon was not angry; she was inconceivably shocked. With tears in her

eyes she pointed toward the prie-dieu.

"Sir," she said, making a last appeal, "kneel with me before the blessed Virgin and admit your errors, so that you may return to New France as a strength to our brethren.

Kneel with me there and acknowledge the true faith, and the only faith, upon which depends the future salvation of the world."

"I will kneel with you, Madame, and pray to God that His works may be increased, but I cannot and I will not admit that He has intrusted their accomplishment to the Jesuits alone."

Madame threw herself upon her knees before

the prie-dieu.

"Blessed Virgin," she prayed, "show him the error of his ways, and convert him to the faith!"

Robert noiselessly retreated, leaving the King's favourite invoking Divine assistance in his behalf, but in his ears were sounding those words of long ago:

"Know well that wherever you may go, be it to the uttermost parts of the earth, this Order will search you out to your destruction. . . . No man can challenge the mighty Society

of Jesus and live!"



CHAPTER XIII THE GREAT KING ACCEPTS THE JUDGMENT OF THE CHURCH





FTER QUITTING
Madame de Maintenon's
apartments Robert lost no
time in seeking Courcelle, and
giving him an outline of his
conversation with Anne, and
also of what had occurred

since. The old man listened in silence until the end of Robert's narrative, and then shook

his head gravely.

"This is a serious affair, my son, and we shall require all our strength and wisdom to meet it. As to going to Quebec with you and my little maid, it would indeed be hard, as Anne has said; but I would do it and gladly for the sake of her happiness. But this other matter is more difficult. To-morrow morning I will present my petition to the King asking his consent to your marriage; and if by good fortune it is granted before Madame de Maintenon gains his ear, you must be married at once, so that we may all sail from here upon the next ship. At

present I have an appointment to keep, my son, so I must leave you."

The old man threw his heavy military cape over his broad shoulders and disappeared in the

direction of the palace.

The next morning Robert walked out into the Cour Royale, where several of the guardsmen were lounging about, awaiting their orders for the day. Cavelier had become an object of interest to them, as the New France was looked upon almost as a myth, and their curiosity concerning it was unlimited. As he was seen approaching, several rose to greet him, and soon he was the centre of an animated group.

"Tell us of the Comte de Frontenac," saidone. "Does he submit meekly to the growing strength of the Church in New France? In the old days, when I served under him at Mülhausen, he would have spit fire in the face of the Devil himself, had he tried to thwart his plans."

Robert smiled at the truth of the picture

which the old soldier drew.

"His spirit has not changed, my friend, but he finds conditions very different in the New World. Frontenac has ambitions to hold that vast empire from the English, but he cannot do it single-handed."

"He may as well give up counting on any Γ 198₇

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help from here," said the guardsman; "for things will be a great sight worse before they will be better. The King is turning priest now that he may confess himself to Scarron's widow. Soldiers and wars will soon be replaced by cassocks and masses, and the priests will own us all."

"Have a care, heretic," interrupted another of the Guards, with mock severity, "else you will be the pendulum dangling on some improvised clock by the roadside!"

"Not while the Edict of Nantes holds good," retorted the first speaker; "but even that may be revoked before we see the end of the

matter."

A page stepped from the door of the palace leading into the Cour de Marbre, and approached the lieutenant of the Guards.

"By the King's orders you will summon the Sieur de La Salle to the council-chamber at once."

"I can save you that trouble, lieutenant," said Robert, rising, "since I have myself heard the orders."

The page led the way to the great councilroom, closely followed by Robert, prepared for anything, determined to be surprised at nothing.

The King was sitting in his armchair before the fire, with Father La Chaise standing beside

him. The monarch was evidently in no agreeable frame of mind, and he scarcely waited for his visitor to salute him before he began to speak.

"What is this I hear, Sieur de La Salle, regarding your rebellious conduct toward our-

self?"

"If you refer to my conversation with Madame de Maintenon, Sire, I can only repeat to you what I said to her. There was no thought of rebellion, Sire, in either attitude or words."

"Very well; repeat it, sir. We will ourselves

judge of your intention."

"I said to her, Sire, that my life was at the disposal of my sovereign whenever and wherever he might ask it, but that my soul belonged to God."

"It is even more of a defiance than she said,"

interrupted Père La Chaise, eagerly.

"Silence, father!" shouted Louis, angrily.
"Since when have I been unable to deal with my subjects without your assistance?"

The priest bowed his head meekly, but in his eyes burned a fire which boded Robert

no good.

"Has any one suggested that your soul belonged to any save to its Maker?" asked the King, again addressing Robert.

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"I have been told, Sire, that unless I deliver over my soul to the Jesuits it is lost forever; and my faith is not that of the Jesuits."

"A heretic, a Huguenot —" began the father, crossing himself; but a stern glance from the

King quickly silenced the interruption.

"Is it for one of my subjects to determine what is the true faith, when his monarch has already decided?"

"By the Edict of Nantes, Sire, one is permitted to accept what faith he chooses," replied Robert, boldly.

"Ay, and perchance the sooner that same Edict of Nantes be revoked, the sooner will my subjects yield me obedience and loyalty!"

Père La Chaise trembled with suppressed joy. Perhaps this episode might bring about the one great hope of his life. At all events, it had already proved an opening wedge of which he would not be slow to avail himself at the proper time.

Robert turned pale in spite of his determination to be surprised at nothing. He knew what the revocation of that Edict would mean to the people of France, and he shuddered at

the suggestion.

"Surely, Sire, you can but jest. You have no more loyal subjects than among those who do not embrace the Jesuit religion; and even

your father and your grandfather were of the

Huguenots."

"Loyalty, sir, means obedience to the King,—not in one thing, but in all things; and I do not require your reminder that I have a double responsibility in righting the errors of my ancestors."

Robert bowed his head hopelessly. The King rose from his chair and again began to speak:

"The measure of your disloyalty, sir, will be determined by your future actions. Monsieur de Courcelle has asked our sanction to your marriage with his daughter. We think too highly of him to permit him to admit a heretic into the bosom of his family. Should you decide to accept the true faith, either now or after your return, our consent may yet be obtained."

The King intimated to Robert that the interview was at an end, and the young man withdrew. He quickly retraced his steps to Courcelle's quarters, where he found the old

man wrapped in deepest gloom.

"There is no hope, my son," said Courcelle, sadly,—"there is absolutely no hope. The Jesuits hold the King with a grip of iron. Besides their antipathy for you, they have not forgotten my own attitude against them at Quebec."

"I have seen the King myself," said Robert,
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"and he gives me my choice between accepting the Jesuit faith and renouncing my marriage."

"You have no choice, my son. Leaving your own sentiments out of the question, I could never receive a Jesuit as my son-in-law, nor would Anne accept one as her husband. You must see her as soon as possible and plan as best you may. The matter is far too deep for my old head to solve."

Courcelle's suffering was so intense that

Robert forgot his own pain.

"Have courage, my father," said he, with forced confidence; "many times have I been confronted by obstacles which seemed too great to be overcome, but thus far I have succeeded in surmounting all. Think you that with the greatest desire of my life before me I shall not succeed in this as in the others?"

"I trust you may be right," replied the old man, but there was no confidence in the voice which spoke; "I have not so happy a record behind me. The Jesuits have thwarted me at every step and have ruined my life. I can only hope that their enmity may not endanger Anne's and yours as well."

"Patience and courage, my father," said Robert, placing his hand upon his shoulder. "I will seek Anne, and we will plan out our

deliverance from the Philistines!"

The two men parted, — one with no ray of hope to illumine the darkness which he felt to be settling down upon him, the other filled with misgivings and with no idea of what the next step would be, yet supported by that buoyancy of youth which cannot know defeat.

Anne had been prepared by her father for the blow which had fallen upon them before she met Robert, and her eyes were red from weeping. In spite of the etiquette of that rigorously-ordered society, she had arranged that they should be alone in one of the antechambers of the palace, and was awaiting Robert when he entered.

"Ah, Robert, will they never cease to persecute us?" she cried, putting her arms about his neck, and sobbing bitterly. "I cannot bear to have you see me as weak as this, yet it does seem as if I had passed through suffering enough without having this new sorrow laid upon me."

"But all is not over yet," replied Robert, stroking the soft hair with his hand. "A thought has come to me, and I believe we can plan a way out of our difficulty, after all."

Anne raised her eyes to his, full of renewed hope.

"Tell me, Robert, —tell me quickly."

"We cannot be married before I leave, as I [204]

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had hoped," said Robert; "and I must return to Quebec upon the ship which sails two weeks from now -- "

"Oh, Robert, must you leave me?" Anne interrupted. "If you go from me another time, I shall never see you again!"

"Listen, dear heart. Another ship will sail in about two months, and on that ship you and your father must come to me. When once I have gone from here, no one will think to watch you closely, and you and your father can quietly slip away without difficulty. When you have reached Quebec we can be married, and the New France is far too distant from Versailles for even Louis' hands to reach across the sea. What think you of my plan?"

"I know not what to think, my Robert, but I fear what may happen during the two months intervening. With you beside me, I feel strength enough to meet any catastrophe, but when the ship takes you away from France, even as the light canoe took you from Quebec so long ago, my heart will again be filled with strange forebodings. Oh, Robert, take us with

you now!"

"Alas, I may not do so! I shall be watched until the blue water shows between the ship's stern and the shore; but once I am away the vigilance will be relaxed. Then you and our

dear father may safely take passage under other names, and we shall be again united amidst the old familiar scenes,"

"I see no other way than you have planned, Robert, but I would that we might go together. Come, let us find my father and ask him what he thinks."

The old soldier had not recovered from the despair in which Robert had left him. He listened attentively to what Robert suggested, and as he had no alternative to offer, advised that the plan be adopted.

"I trust that all may be carried out as you have arranged it, my son; but here at Versailles we live upon the crater of a volcano, which is ever ready to break out, and we know not what each day may bring forth. We can only plan as best we may, and hope that something may arise to confuse our enemies."

The few days which remained of Robert's stay in France passed all too rapidly, and the last evening before the sailing of the ship was at hand. He and Anne had spent the afternoon taking a farewell walk through the beautiful park, jealous of each passing moment.

"See, Anne," said Robert, "here is the very spot where I first spoke to you, and you up-

braided me for my presumption."

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"I could not believe that it was you, Robert. It seemed as if one spoke from the past."

"But I am very much of the present, am I

not?" asked Robert, laughing.

"To-day you are, my beloved, but where will you be to-morrow or the next day? I cannot bear to have you go, Robert. The old-time sadness will return, and these few weeks we have had together will seem but as a brief, delusive dream."

"But four months hence we can again take up the dream, dear one, and then it will have no ending."

The approaching dusk warned them that they must return to the palace, for Robert had yet to say good-bye to the sad old man, who saw no future save that which gloom had filled. A faint smile greeted the two lovers as they entered his apartment, and he held out his great arms to embrace them both.

"Farewell, my son. God grant you a safe voyage, and to us all a glad reunion at no distant time. I will watch over our little maid, and guard her for you, since soon it must be to you alone that she may look for sympathy and love."

Tears gathered in the eyes of all.

"Before I go, father," said Robert, kneeling before him and drawing Anne down beside [207]

him, "I ask your blessing to take with me over seas, to abide with me until the happy day of your arrival."

The old man placed one hand upon the head of each of the two who knelt before him, and with tears streaming down his cheeks he pronounced a benediction. For a long moment thereafter they remained in the same position in silence. Then they rose, and the two lovers were clasped in a farewell embrace. With a hearty grasp of his hand Robert parted with the old man, and without trusting himself to speak again, he hurried from the room and threw himself upon his horse. A moment later the clatter of hoofs announced that he had started upon his ride to Paris. A flutter of handkerchiefs. a glimpse of December and May standing together behind him, and Robert Cavelier, the Sieur de La Salle, was alone upon his journey. The next morning at daybreak found him upon the ship, and what seemed to him but a few hours later nothing but a hazy outline showed what was the coast of France.



FATE PROVES ITSELF MORE POTENT THAN STRATEGY





HEN ROBERT REturned to Quebec with a title of nobility and in possession of perhaps the most valuable seigniory in all New France, even Jean Cavelier and his fellow Jesuits were

forced to admit to themselves that the object of their enmity had gained strength by his visit to France. They were at a loss, however, to explain the cause of their defeat. They could not believe that their Order was losing its hold upon the King, yet this man, admittedly dangerous to them, had returned from the lion's den covered with honours instead of in disgrace, as they had hoped would be the case.

Frontenac was deeply interested in the report which Robert brought of conditions in France. It was no surprise to him, yet it was a hard blow to have his worst fears confirmed. It had been his dearest ambition to hold New France against the English, but now the sagacious sol-

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dier saw clearly the hopelessness of the task. He recognised that his recall was inevitable, and this certainty caused him completely to change his attitude. From this time on he would exercise the authority of his position to the utmost, strengthening the colony to the advantage of his successor. It would make him still more hated by the priests, and would undoubtedly result in an earlier recall; but New France, and he hoped France as well, would eventually profit by his course.

Robert immediately began preparations to establish himself in his new possessions before the Courcelles should arrive two months later. He left Quebec and garrisoned Fort Frontenac with soldiers, also maintaining there an army of labourers, and rebuilding it with stone throughout. He formed a partnership with the Governor, Lieutenant La Forest, and with one Boisseau in the trading monopoly which his seigniory afforded; and even with the heavy royalty promised to the Crown, it was apparent that a fortune awaited the newly-formed company. Robert's one regret was that the distance between Quebec and the fort interrupted his daily intercourse with the Governor; but in spite of this difficulty the two men kept in close touch with each other.

As soon as the merchants of the colony real-

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ised how valuable a privilege Robert and his friends had obtained, they leagued themselves in bitter opposition. Even Jacques Le Ber, who had been so intimate a friend of his in Montreal, turned to his enemies, being deeply incensed that he had not been asked to join the company. Bazire, La Chesnaye, Le Moyne, and other influential traders opposed him, and his position would have been a difficult one to maintain but for the Governor's strong friendship and active coöperation.

Jean Cavelier and the Jesuits watched with ill-concealed jealousy the turn affairs had at first taken; but they were now well satisfied to see so strong an opposition spring up, which they could make play into their own hands. They contributed generously to the combination of merchants, both in funds and in active participation, and the fight gave promise of being to the death for one side or the other.

In the meantime the two months had passed by, and one fair morning the ship for which Robert waited sailed into the harbour. He had been in Quebec more than a week awaiting its arrival, and in his impatience he put off to the ship without even his faithful Piskaret beside him in the frail canoe. The vigorous strokes of the paddle placed him alongside of the ship before any of the heavier boats of the

settlers, and he earnestly scanned the faces of the little company gathered on the main deck for a sight of those he so anxiously awaited.

They were not there. Surely there must be some mistake. Then he remembered that they were to sail under assumed names, and perhaps their caution led them to secrete themselves until the last moment to prevent recognition. With this hope in his heart he watched until all the voyagers were landed; but there were no signs of Anne or her father. He inquired of the captain, and learned that no such persons as he described had taken passage.

There was nothing but to accept the bitter disappointment; yet Robert was filled with misgivings. Was Anne ill, or had the Jesuits prevented her from sailing, after all? The uncertainty was hardest for him to bear. Robert paddled back to shore much more slowly than he had gone out to welcome the ship. His position in the colony, his prosperity, his hopes for future explorations, all meant nothing to him unless they could be shared with the woman he loved.

No other vessel could be expected for another six months at best. It was necessary again to wait, and waiting was the deepest penance which Robert Cavelier's spirit could endure. But even the most restless heart at length

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learns its lesson, and Robert once more returned to his work at the seigniory of Fort Frontenac.

The location of Fort Frontenac was a particularly favourable one, standing as it did sixty leagues beyond Montreal on the north side of Lake Frontenac, facing the country of the five Iroquois nations to the south. It might well impress the native savages with the strength of the settlers, as its construction was massive and imposing. A moat fifteen feet wide surrounded the fort itself, which formed a square with four bastions. The walls were twelve feet high and three feet thick, enclosing a building made of hewn timber, a hundred feet long. Besides this there were a forge, a dwelling for Robert's officers, and a cow stable. Near by the land had been cleared ready for cultivation, and a grange was in process of erection for storing the bountiful harvests of which Robert seemed assured. The force of soldiers and workmen with which the Governor had supplied him had already accomplished much, and the fort began to assume finished proportions.

The Jesuits felt it necessary at this time to redouble their efforts to hold their power. Frontenac had hit them hard both directly and indirectly by the vigorous maintenance of his own authority. Even when apparently yielding he invariably carried his point. Recognis-

ing a strong hand at the helm, traders flocked into the country, feeling secure that their interests would be protected; and as a result New France grew from a mission into a colony.

But the contact of these traders with the Indians did much to nullify the work of the priests, for the savages learned readily from the white man, and did not accept the teachings of the missions with such unqualified confidence. In addition to this grievance, the Jesuits depended upon the revenue derived from their secret participation in the fur-trade far more than they would have admitted; and here again the traders seriously interfered with them. Their troubles were accumulating one by one, and the formation of the new company at Fort Frontenac, which seemed the triumph of their enemies, was a misfortune requiring thoughtful consideration.

Bishop Laval summoned the members of the Order to a conference where matters were carefully reviewed and discussed. It was quite evident that the Governor and Robert were the two men most necessary to be removed from their path. The Governor must be handled through the efforts of those high in authority and influence at Court, but they themselves could deal with the renegade novice. Their tenets required absolute secrecy and security to

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the Order in a case like this, which made it impossible to carry out what was in the minds of all since Robert had advised the Governor of the threat, and Frontenac would not hesitate to investigate searchingly any accident which befell him. Definite action must be deferred until a safer time, but in the meanwhile diplomacy might afford temporary relief.

Jean Cavelier, both because of his natural characteristics and of his relationship to Robert, was selected by the priests to make the attempt. The details of the plan were carefully arranged, and Father Cavelier's instructions from the

Bishop were clear and definite.

Had Robert known all this, he would not have been surprised to see his brother approaching the seigniory one morning; but as it was, he merely wondered to himself what new treachery was on foot.

Jean entered the nearly-completed fort with perfect self-command and confidence, at once approaching Robert. The latter stood beside a pile of stones giving no sign of recognition. It was the first time he had seen his brother since his return from France.

"A greeting, brother," said Jean, cordially, holding out his hand.

Robert made no move to accept the proffered friendship.

"What Devil's errand brings you here, Jean?" he asked brusquely. "I do not flatter myself that you have come to congratulate me

upon my safe return."

"You wrong me, Robert. I have come to make amends for past mistakes. I have misjudged you, and admit my error. Now that you have been in France and have settled your misunderstanding with the Father Superior, as you must have done to receive such honours at the hand of the King, 't would surely be unbrotherly to criticise you further. Come, let us forget the past and begin this day to live as brothers should, in sympathy and concord."

In spite of Robert's surprise, the unexpected change in his brother's attitude did not deceive him. He knew Jean Cavelier too well not to understand that a hatred once engendered never left him, nor did he overlook the fact that Jean was master of the art of simulation. He regarded him curiously for a moment. There must be some interesting plot at the bottom of this suddenly-developed affection, and there was but one way to learn it.

"So be it, Jean," he said. "Since you, the older brother, make the advances for our reconciliation, it would ill become me, the younger, to be less generous. I quite agree with you,

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and shall reciprocate your proffered friendship with equal sincerity."

Jean smiled benignly.

"We have differed in the past, my brother, but we have differed honestly. I thought you fitted to follow in my footsteps, and sought to provide for you the opportunity. You have proved me wrong in this, and I acknowledge my mistake. Your strength lies in another direction, and in a direction equally important. The secrets of the forests, the sources of the rivers, and the boundaries of our empire must needs be discovered and extended; and you are the only man in the colony to accomplish this. I congratulate you, and I wish you success."

"I thank you for your good wishes, Jean, and I shall endeavour to merit your confidence,"

replied Robert, drily.

Jean bit his lip, but the smile had been re-

stored by the time Robert's eye met his.

"I should be glad to aid you in your undertakings, Robert, to prove the sincerity of my affection. I think, too, that I can improve your standing with the fathers, who will take my judgment to offset past prejudices. Will you accept my assistance?"

"Might I first ask what conditions are to be

imposed?"

"Conditions? None whatever! You are [217]

anxious, naturally, to set out upon your expedition as soon as possible, instead of wasting your time in these business affairs which must prove irksome to a man of your temperament. If I can aid you in gratifying your desires, I shall indeed be pleased."

Light was beginning to break a little in Robert's mind. If he could be gotten out of the colony immediately, not only would Frontenac be deprived of a valuable ally, but the success of the monopoly at Fort Frontenac would be greatly impaired. Robert smiled to himself, but he wished to play with his quarry a while longer.

"You are most discerning, brother Jean. I had not believed that you could discover that which my closest friends have overlooked. It shows a brother's intuition. I value the friend-liness of the offer, but I fear that there is little you could do by way of assistance, however strong your intentions."

"I can provide you with money and with men."

"How can you, a priest, supply me with money or with men? Or perhaps you come to me as a messenger of your Order, to offer me in their name that which you cannot give yourself? And the men you speak of would, I suppose, be Jesuits?"

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"Yes," answered Jean, quickly; "but what of that? They would be in your service and under your command."

Robert's amusement gave way to fierce indignation. It was all so simple, so patent, that it was an insult to his intelligence to suppose that he could be so duped. The smile vanished from Jean's face as he beheld the change which came over his brother, and he drew back a step as Robert began to speak.

"In my service and under my command? Truly, but well instructed before they quit Quebec to leave a knife driven to the hilt in the body of the poor explorer who was fool enough to accept their services! I think we understand each other, Jean. Go back to your brothers in the faith, and tell them that the Sieur de La Salle, even though he be your brother, has not yet reached that point of degradation where he would sell out his associates for the gratification of his ambition, nor try to buy traitorous assistance with honest promises."

"You make a great mistake—" began Jean.

"Silence!" roared Robert, his anger past control. "Go back, I say, and tell them that nothing but the fact that the same blood runs in our veins prevented Robert Cavelier from quieting his brother's lying tongue forever. Go

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back, and never cross my path again, or your blood be upon your own head. Go!"

Jean Cavelier was too great a coward not to heed the command, but when a safe distance had been placed between them, he paused and looked back. His face still twitched with suppressed rage, and his voice trembled so that Robert could scarcely eateh the words.

"Again you have reviled me, Robert Cavelier. Again you have defied me! But mark me well. The day will come when I shall pay in full my reckoning, and as God lives, when that day comes I will show no mercy!" and shaking his fist defiantly at the seignior of Fort Frontenac, he disappeared over the top of the hill which led down to the river.

But fate was to succeed where strategy had failed. Eight months and more had passed since Robert's return to New France, and a second ship had arrived without bringing to him the realisation of his hopes or any word concerning the Courcelles. He was convinced that the worst had happened, for surely Anne would have sent him at least a message explaining their delay. He blamed himself for having left them; he might have suffered and died with them there in France if worst had come to worst. Frontenac did what he could to keep hope alive in Robert's heart, but the old soldier was too

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familiar with life at the Court of Louis XIV. to be any too sure himself that the young man's

apprehensions were not fully justified.

Frontenac, however, had other matters, and serious ones, to cause him grave anxiety. The Iroquois for months had been sullen and restless, and during the last fortnight had attacked several of the smaller outlying settlements. It was again necessary to teach them a lesson, and Robert, in command of the soldiers at Quebec, must head the troops. In his present condition Robert welcomed anything that would distract his mind from its great burden, and his absence from Quebec need not be long; so, less than two weeks after Jean's visit to him, and his angry refusal to fall into the trap of the Jesuit priests, he voluntarily set out upon an undertaking even more dangerous, leaving Fort Frontenac in charge of La Forest, his lieutenant and friend.



CHAPTER XV

·A

FAIR · MAID RETURNS

TO-NEW-FRANCE





OBERT'S FEARS THAT

he might never again see Anne Courcelle were in reality well founded. In that last glimpse of her, waving good-bye to him at Versailles, he little knew how

much her woman's heart must yet endure in suffering and in sorrow before she could turn her face toward that New World in which she hoped at last to find happiness and rest.

Anne and her father watched the solitary horseman until even the distant cloud of dust had entirely vanished, and then, almost at the same moment, they turned to each other.

"When shall we see him again, my father?" asked Anne, choking back the sobs which struggled to gain control of her. "If it were not for you, dear, my courage would not endure this latest trial."

Her father drew her nearer to him.

"Tut, tut, daughter; it is not meet that you [222]

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should take so dark a view. For me, life is nearly at its close, but for you, my child, it is only just beginning. It is hard, I know, after so long a sorrow, to have another disappointment forced upon you; but we may yet hope to find our happiness upon the further shore of that great sea which soon will bear your lover upon its bosom."

Together they walked slowly back to the palace, where they separated, — Anne to take up her duties with the Princess Palatine, the old soldier to resume the uneventful life at his quarters. Time was not treating Courcelle as kindly now as formerly. Struggling as he had against such fearful odds in New France only to return to a polite retirement in France, amidst scenes which were most irksome, the last few years bore heavily upon him. But Anne, with all her watchfulness, failed to recognise how plainly each day left its mark upon him, or how much it cost of his strength to keep up the deception which prevented her from realising it.

Every day now the two spent as much time as possible together, planning for their voyage. Little by little the plain wardrobe, which was to replace the gorgeous attire of the maid of honour, grew beneath Anne's skilful fingers. As her interest increased, and the day for

departure approached, her spirits rose, and she regained her old-time confidence.

It was a sweet sight to see the old man watching Anne as she worked beside him while they talked over their future, entering into her plans with all the eagerness which he could assume. But his thoughts were far away. It was not his daughter whom he saw before him, but rather another brown-eyed woman who had left him more than twenty years before. He was living over again those few brief months of his married life, listening to the sweet music which had ceased for him so soon. He was the lover once again; and he forgot his burdens and his sorrows.

The two months had nearly passed now, and but three days remained before Anne and her father were to slip away from Versailles forever, and again set foot upon that untamed continent which resisted the conqueror's hand with such persistence. Passage was engaged under assumed names, and Anne was sitting in her father's room, taking the last stitches and talking over the final details. Both were eager to get away, for it became more evident each day that the hand which now guided the fortunes of Louis XIV. was a steady one, and that his absolute recognition of the Jesuit supremacy was the inevitable goal. If they were to

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become fugitives at all, the time could not come too soon.

Father and daughter had been sitting as usual for an hour or more when the conversation turned upon Anne's childhood.

"Can you remember when I was a little girl, father, and cried because you would not let me go into a boat upon the lake? We little thought then what long voyages we would take together, did we, dear?"

"Nay, nay, my child; we little thought it. I could not bear to let you from my sight, for you were all I had."

"Am I very like my mother, father? You often tell me so."

"Yes, daughter; very, very like."

The old man's eyes became dreamy, and he did not seem to hear the next question.

"I wish I might have seen her, father; I wish I too might have known her."

There was no response, and the grey head sank lower upon his breast, but Anne continued with her work. Suddenly the old man straightened up, and his eyes shone bright and clear. He seemed to be listening to some one speaking, yet Anne could hear no sound. She dropped her work hastily and placed her hand upon his shoulder.

"Father—father—" she cried, thoroughly
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alarmed; "what is it? Tell me what it is!"

"I hear your mother calling me, my child, —your mother calling. Ah, Rénée, my beloved, I am coming to you! Oh, how long I have waited! Rénée, Rénée, I am coming!"

Before Anne could prevent it the old man was upon his feet, staggering to the door. Ere he reached it his strength gave way and he sank upon the floor. Anne raised his head and held it in her lap. His eyes were closed, but his face was illumined with that light which only comes from Heaven.

"Patience, Rénée, I am coming to you. So long we have waited!—so long, so long!"

The words came faintly with the fleeting breath, and with the last the old man kept his promise. No more would the Sieur de Courcelle fight battles for France; no more would he guard the infant colony against the inroads of the wily Indians; no more would he tread the snowy paths about Quebec. His labours were completed, and his soul had found its rest.

To Anne it was not the Sieur de Courcelle whose head she held in her lap: it was the father who had been mother as well to her ever since she came into the world; it was the counselor, the constant companion, the oak upon which she leaned. The blow fell so

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swiftly that a full realisation did not at once come to the girl, and she covered the dear face with caresses as if to force Death to give back its own.

At last it was evident to her that the end had come, and she gently placed the cloak upon which she had been working beneath the grizzled head, and rose to her feet, keeping her eyes upon the body before her. There was no cry; there were no tears. She moved toward the door like one in a dream, and opening it summoned assistance. The old man was tenderly laid upon his bed by the guardsmen who came in quick response to Anne's call, and then they turned to the silent figure standing beside them. They called her by name, but there was no reply. They led her to a chair and forced her gently into it. The great brown eyes looked blankly into space. She obeyed meekly, but gave no recognition either by speech or deed. Thoroughly alarmed, one of the guards hastened to the palace for assistance, the other keeping watch over the living even as she kept watch over the dead. When two of her companions came with blanched faces to take her to her room in the palace, she made no resistance, following their guidance still without a word in answer to their sympathy.

For weeks she lay hovering between life and [227]

death. Her father had been so real, so close to her, that when his heart ceased beating it was as if a part of her own life had also ceased. Her youth and the loving care of friends at last triumphed, and nearly two months later the Court physicians pronounced her out of danger. It would be long yet before her strength would fully return, but the crisis was past and recovery assured.

Her first thought was of Robert, but there was no possible way to send word to him. A message intrusted to any one of the household would probably result in putting it forever beyond her power to leave Versailles. Hard as it was for her and for him, she must wait until she became strong enough to move about by herself, when she could safely appeal to Robert's friend, the Prince de Conti. Robert alone was to comfort her, and she longed for her strength to return that she might go to him.

Her strong desire aided her convalescence. At length she could walk out in the park; but what memories it recalled! Here she had strolled day after day with her father; here she had walked with Robert. Winter held the land in the full strength of its sway, and there was winter in Anne's heart.

She saw the Prince de Conti, and he gladly promised to assist her in getting away upon the

ANNE RETURNS TO NEW FRANCE

next ship, but even so two boats had gone without her, and she knew how anxious Robert must have become. She lived only for the day of departure, and the time went by on leaden wings. She was but a shadow of her former self, and no one questioned when she asked permission to retire from Court for a time to visit relatives in Paris. Nor would any one have recognised in the sad, pale-faced Mademoiselle Rémy, who took passage upon the vessel bound for New France, Mademoiselle de Courcelle, the beautiful maid of honour to the Princess Palatine.

The voyage was long and tempestuous, but after nine weeks' tossing upon the sea, the weary voyagers at length beheld Quebec before them. To Anne the scene was not a novel one, and her eyes were strained only to catch sight of the face which had ever been before her since France faded away in the distance. Her heart throbbed almost painfully at the thought that at last she could rest her tired head upon her lover's breast, and find in his strong arms that sympathy for which she longed. She was not as strong after her illness as she had believed, and hope alone sustained her weakness.

Were it not for that hope which ever shines through sorrow, the burden of grief would surely prove too heavy to be borne; but the intellect is

stronger than the heart, and it is well that it always receives the first force of the blow, transmitting it to the weaker member with merciful tenderness.

Excitement brought a touch of colour to Anne's cheek, and her eyes shone with expectant relief as she searched for Robert in the many boats and canoes which came out from the shore; but her quest proved unsuccessful. She saw a few faces which she recognised, but that voice for the sound of which her heart waited, calling her name and impatiently awaiting her response, was silent, and she felt faint as the thought came to her that perhaps some misfortune had befallen Robert. Surely he would have been the first to welcome the ship in the harbour had he been able to get there.

She grasped the rail before her for support, and closed her eyes. If Robert was taken from her, then indeed was the world swallowed up in darkness. He was her last hope, her one desire. She could bear the suspense no longer. Regaining control of herself with great effort, she called down to the occupant of the little boat nearest to where she stood.

"Know you, sir, if Master Cavelier came out to meet the ship?"

The man looked up at her, surprised at being accosted by a strange voice from the ship.

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"Master Cavelier, say you?" he asked. "Nay, fair mistress; Master Cavelier left Quebec a month since, pursuing the Iroquois, and we have had no word of him."

Anne could scarcely frame an acknowledgment of the reply. Her voice was choked, and her eyes filled with tears. Still, as her thoughts came rapidly, this news was better than what she had at first feared. There was no reason to think that Robert was not both alive and well, and if he had been away some little time, he must the sooner return; and she could wait for him. Hope again offered her a respite, and she suffered herself to be transferred into one of the boats and conveyed in silence to the shore.

The ship brought over six "King's maids," as they were called, who came from France seeking husbands in the New World. For this reason the unmarried men of the colony gathered about the landing-place to inspect the new arrivals. It was but natural, unattended as she was, that Anne should be mistaken for one of these girls; and as the little boat approached the shore, a commotion was evident among the party awaiting the landing of the voyagers.

No sooner had Anne stepped ashore than the foremost of these men seized her by the arm and attempted to hurry her through the crowd.

Before she could protest a second man grasped her by the other arm, so that the frightened girl knew not which way to turn. Her first captor, however, solved the difficulty at once, by striking his rival a powerful blow, which stretched him senseless upon the beach. Anne drew back in terror, but the man again seized her by the arm and hurried her away.

As soon as an open space was reached, Anne escaped from his grasp and confronted him with

flaming eyes and burning cheeks.

"What means this insolence, sir? Has Quebec fallen so low that a maid may not land upon its shores without receiving a welcome so insulting?"

The man laughed coarsely, and again attempted to seize her arm; but she evaded him.

"Have a care, hussy," said he. "I've paid my hundred pounds of tobacco for you, and I'll have my goods, even though I draw a

vixen for my lot."

"What mean you?" cried Anne, aghast as she understood his meaning. "Do you think me one of those shameless things which must needs be bought and sold like so many cattle? I have indeed come to seek a husband, but not from such as you. Were he here, you would not live to speak another word to me."

"T is a temper you have, right enough, my [232]

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pretty; but I'll take my chances. I've tamed heifers and colts, and I'm not afraid to try your restless spirit. Come along to the priest and be married."

He grasped Anne roughly by the shoulder, with one arm about her waist, and forced her on toward the market-place, where several couples were already standing, awaiting their turn to be made man and wife. Anne struggled in vain against the strength of the man beside her. The spectators considered it an amusing episode, and made no attempt to interfere.

Anne glanced about her in despair. There was no one but the Jesuit father to whom she could appeal. She waited in silence until the other couples had been united, and then as the priest began the service, she threw herself

at his feet.

"Oh, father, save me from this humiliation! I am not a King's maid, but have come to meet my true affianced husband."

The father raised her to her feet, and the girl

looked beseechingly into his face.

"Robert!" she cried aghast, "surely it is not you, — so thin, so pale, and in a priest's attire!"

"I am Father Jean Cavelier," replied the priest, calmly, gazing attentively at the girl before him. "For whom did you mistake me?"

"Jean Cavelier,—Robert's brother!" she cried. "Then surely you will save me. I am Anne Courcelle, and Robert has expected my arrival."

Jean suppressed an exclamation of surprise.

"My dear sister," said he, smiling blandly as he took her hand in his, "I am indeed rejoiced to see you, though pained that you should have had this unpleasant experience. I fear, too, that I am much to blame, for my brother asked me to welcome you in his stead, knowing that he might be delayed in returning from his expedition. My duties kept me from being at the ship."

The expectant bridegroom sullenly withdrew, cursing the mistake which cost him his opportunity of gaining a wife, as the King's maids had already found their mates. He must wait until another ship arrived, and Colbert succeeded in gathering another consignment of spouses for

the colonists of New France.

Freed from the presence of her persecutor, Anne's courage returned, and she looked at Jean inquiringly.

"Did Robert expect you to welcome me in

his stead, father? I thought - "

"He has told you of our past differences," interrupted Jean. "I am sorry that he did so, as we talked matters over before his departure,

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effecting a reconciliation, and I should have been glad to have you meet me without prejudice. However, be that as it may. It now remains for me to prove myself to you as I have to him, and I am glad that the opportunity has come so soon. Who but his brother, and a priest, should welcome Robert's future wife to New France?"

Anne could not doubt the sincerity with which Jean spoke, and her experiences had been so unlooked for that she felt unable to think for herself. Jean easily read what was passing in her mind, and he hastened to follow up the advantage he had gained.

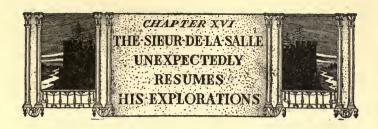
"My brother desired me to place you with the sisters of the Hôtel Dieu, who will care for you while you are awaiting his return. I will

take you to them now."

The girl followed the priest without a protest. The present situation seemed incredible, yet if Robert had really become reconciled to his brother he would surely wish and expect her to accept this protection. She knew not what to do, and saw no other alternative. Jean assisted her up the inclined path leading to the Hôtel Dieu, and when she entered there, and found herself warmly welcomed by the sweetfaced sisters, she forgot that she was standing in the shadow of the Jesuit cross. Her tired body

yielded willingly to the gentle care of the nuns, and she fell into an exhausted sleep upon the bed in the little room to which they led her.

Jean Cavelier considered the unexpected meeting with Robert's betrothed a special dispensation from Heaven. As he walked rapidly away from the Hôtel Dieu he smiled exultantly to himself. Here at last was the opportunity for which he had waited to reach his brother's vulnerable point. Anne Courcelle was in his power, and much might happen before the Sieur de La Salle returned from his expedition against the Iroquois.



HE PARTY WHICH

Robert led against the Iroquois was in striking contrast to that which had set out with him upon his previous expedition. Picked soldiers of the settlement now replaced the

murderous adventurers who attempted his life on Lake Erie; and the faithful Piskaret, who still followed his master with a slave's devotion, generously shared Robert's friendship with two new allies.

Henri de Tonty and La Mott de Lussière came to Quebec upon the same ship which bore the newly-created Sieur de La Salle back to the scene of his labours, and the three men formed a firm bond of friendship during the two months' voyage. Tonty and Robert found much in common, especially after discovering that both claimed the Prince de Conti as patron; and La Mott charmed them all by the frankness and ease of his manner, as well

as by his undoubted courage and sincerity. Robert soon learned that Tonty had seen service in the Sicilian wars, where he had lost one of his hands, — now replaced by one of iron, ever carefully concealed by his glove. His father had been governor of Gaeta, who owing to political disturbances in Naples brought his family to France, where he earned an enviable reputation as a financier, besides inventing that form of life insurance which is still called the Tontine.

When it was known at the fort that Robert was to be sent against the Iroquois, both Tonty and La Mott asked to accompany him. This added great strength to the party, and their companionship contributed much in assisting Robert to throw off his overpowering fear that some misfortune had befallen Anne.

Once in the forest again, Robert became the explorer, and as the party advanced league after league, with the wily Indians retreating before his formidable force, the old fever returned to him. It was his desire to administer a crushing rebuke to the savages for their broken faith, but they gave him no opportunity. They desisted, however, in their previous raids upon the settlements, so the chief purpose of the expedition was accomplished.

At last the party found itself at Niagara, where familiar scenes greeted Robert's eyes.

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His return to forest life filled him with exhilaration, and at this point an inspiration came to him. Why was this not his opportunity to accomplish the discovery of the Mississippi? So much of the journey had already been covered that it would mean a delay of only a few months in returning to Quebec. He could not have selected a stronger party had he intended this from the first, and his letters-patent from the King gave him the necessary authority. All seemed to point in the one direction, and after a conference with Tonty and La Mott his course was determined.

The first step in Robert's projected enterprise must be to build a ship upon which to convey his company and the accumulated stores. A spot was found beyond the cataract on one side of the mouth of Cayuga Creek, where an island lying some little distance from the shore diverted a part of the current of the river toward the eastern bank.

When the work of construction was well under way, Robert left Tonty in charge and returned to the mouth of the river, where he began to build a rough blockhouse. In spite of the necessity of sending to Fort Frontenac for supplies, in spite of the difficulties which attended every step in the construction, and in spite of his fears that the Senecas, in whose

country they were camping, would burn the ship on the stocks, Tonty succeeded in completing the boat in two months' time; and in May the "Griffon" was launched amid great rejoicings on the part of the impatient soldiers, who were anxious to proceed upon the expedition.

Robert returned as soon as all was completed, and the "Griffon" was towed up against the current until she could set sail upon the broad waters of Lake Erie. For three days she ploughed a path in the hitherto virgin waves until the Strait of Detroit was reached, and rolling prairies lay spread out before her on one hand, great forests on the other. Stopping only long enough to replenish their stock with deer, wild turkey, and bear, the "Griffon" again proceeded upon her prosperous voyage, — crossing Lake St. Claire, on into Lake Huron, pointing her prow toward St. Ignace of Michilimackinac.

But the waters which had thus far received their strange visitor with awe and placidity now awoke to the intrusion, resenting the audacity of the little ship. The calmness turned in a moment to a terrific gale, and the vessel seemed about to meet her doom. Down upon their knees fell the frightened soldiers, commending themselves to St. Anthony

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of Padua, and praying that they might be spared the ignominy of perishing in fresh water after having braved the dangers of field and flood.

Robert, Tonty, and La Mott alone faced the situation. The terrified pilot threw himself face downward upon the deck, cursing his commander for having led them into this catastrophe. Robert seized the tiller, with one of his two friends on either side to prevent the waves from washing him overboard, and steered this plaything of the storm through the night and danger into a morning as quiet as it was beautiful.

The weather-beaten voyagers again took heart, and looked with glad eyes upon the palisaded house and chapel of the Jesuits which marked the St. Ignace mission. The natives from the Ottawa village put out to the ship in canoes, gazing in wonder upon the unusual sight and christening her the "floating fort" out of respect to the five puny cannon which showed themselves ominously from her port-holes.

Once more the party felt the firm ground beneath their feet. They would take their chances in the frail canoes, or they would toil patiently through the unbroken forests; but no more would they intrust their lives to the ship. Robert saw that remonstrance was useless, so he proceeded to buy from the natives a valuable

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supply of furs, asking his companions to proceed upon the "Griffon" only as far as Green Bay in Lake Michigan, where he promised to complete his shipment to his associates at Fort Frontenac, and continue the journey by foot or canoe. The party finally accepted the compromise; and at the appointed spot the ship exchanged her human freight for the peltry intended to enrich the seigniory.

Robert watched the ship as she drew away from Green Bay, again pointed toward Niagara. His faith in the pilot was shaken both by his conduct during the storm and his evident eagerness to accept the trust. He could not have believed, however, that this was to be the last time his eyes were to rest upon the "Griffon," or that the treacherous hand at the helm would wreck the boat upon the shore, hoping to escape with his ill-gotten booty. Had he foreseen this, it might have given him a grim satisfaction to know also that the savages would act as his avengers, for the faithless pilot met his fate at their hands.

The depleted party, after the departure of the "Griffon," at once embarked in their canoes, half the men accompanying Tonty along the eastern shore of the lake, while Robert and the rest continued southward along the Wisconsin shore. Rough weather still followed them and forced

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them to take shelter as best they could. Now crouching about a miserable driftwood fire, wet to the skin in spite of the blankets wrapped around them; now swamped as they attempted to land from their canoes, and obliged to make every exertion to save their stores; now standing on guard through all the night in dread of the surrounding natives; now living on Indian corn, and all too little of that,—on the hardy adventurers pushed to the site of Milwaukee, around the southern shore of Lake Michigan, until they reached the mouth of the St. Joseph.

The divided party reunited here and ascended the St. Joseph for several days, finally loading themselves down with the canoes and baggage, and beginning their dreary march to the sources of the Illinois. The Kankakee was reached, and the tired men were glad to place their canoes upon its sluggish waters, drifting down through a barren and desolate country.

Soon the stream widened into a river, and more interesting scenes began to present themselves. Broad prairies stretched out on either side with evident signs of animal life. Buffalo, wolves, deer, cranes and pelicans, wild swans and turkeys, appeared from time to time, and Piskaret found ample opportunity to display that mastery in marksmanship which had made

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him invaluable to the expedition ever since Green Bay had been left behind them.

A few leagues farther was the valley of the Illinois. On the left, rising high and sheer, was a cliff covered with trees which afterward came to be known as "Starved Rock"; on the right lay the site of what was later to be the village of Utica. Four days more and Pimitoui, now called Peoria Lake, was reached, and undoubted evidences of the near presence of an Indian encampment were discovered.

Robert laid his plans promptly. The canoes were beached, and a hasty camp, without fires, was pitched. Guards were placed about the camp, and the party sought much-needed rest. Early the next morning the eight canoes were again pushed from the shore, and without warning the white men, with muskets in their hands, appeared before the eighty Illinois wigwams. Robert leaped upon the shore, quickly followed by the others, and advanced fearlessly into the centre of the group of terrified savages.

When the Indians found that no immediate attack was contemplated, two of the chiefs came forward, holding the calumet before them. Robert accepted their offers of friendship, and when the party was seated in the midst of their

savage hosts, he harangued them.

"I have come," he said, "to protect you [244]

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against your enemies and to teach you to pray to the true God. As for the Iroquois, they are subjects of the Great King, and are therefore brethren of the French; but should they begin a war and invade the country of the Illinois, I will stand by you, and give you guns, and fight in your defence, if you will permit me to build a fort among you for the security of my men. But if you will not consent to my plans, then I will pass on to the Osages, leaving you to the mercy of the Iroquois."

Robert touched their lifelong jealousy of the Osages, and his threat produced good effect. Everything he asked was promised to him, and feasts and dances were provided for his entertainment. That evening, however, unknown to him, Monso, a Mascoutin chief, arrived at the camp with gifts for the Illinois. A secret conclave of the chiefs was held, at which Monso warned them against Robert and his offers of friendship, accusing him of being a spy and a friend of the Iroquois. Robert's plan, he declared, was to encourage the tribes beyond the Mississippi to combine against the Illinois, and he urged that the only safety for his friends lay in preventing Robert from continuing his journey. Having confided this information, Monso left the camp.

On the following morning Robert quickly

observed that a change had come over the attitude of the chiefs. He was at a loss to understand it, however, until Omawha, one of the Indians to whom he had given a present the day before, secretly told him what had taken place. He was prepared, therefore, to receive the urgent advice of the chief, Nicanopé, not to proceed further down the Mississippi. The river, the Indian said, was filled with venomous serpents and alligators, and the shores were peopled with hostile tribes; there were impassable rapids and whirlpools, and the waters finally emptied into a bottomless gulf.

These warnings had no terror for Robert, but to his men they were full of ominous forebodings. A great change had come over the party since they had left Fort Frontenac. Months of suffering and privation had destroyed their morale and weakened their courage. A few remained loyal, but the majority felt certain that they were advancing to their

destruction.

Robert listened until Nicanopé finished his speech, and then rose with great dignity.

"I thank you for the friendly warning which your affection has impelled you to utter," he said quietly; "but the greater the danger, the greater the honour,—and even if the dangers you picture were real, Frenchmen would never

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flinch from them. But," he continued, looking Nicanopé firmly in the eye, "is my brother not jealous? Has he not been deluded by lies? We were not asleep, my brother, when Monso came to tell you, under cover of the night, that we were spies of the Iroquois. The presents he gave you that you might believe his falsehoods are at this moment buried in the earth under this lodge. If he told the truth, why did he skulk away in the dark? Why did he not show himself by day? Do you not see that when we first came among you, and your camp was all in confusion, we could have killed you without needing help from the Iroquois. And now, as I am speaking, could we not put your old men to death while your young warriors are all gone away to hunt? If we meant to make war on you, we should need no help from the Iroquois, who have so often felt the force of our arms. Look at what we have brought you. It is not weapons to destroy you, but merchandise and tools for your good. If you still harbour evil thoughts of us, be as frank as we are, and speak them boldly. Go after this impostor Monso and bring him back, that we may answer him face to face; for he never saw either us or the Iroquois, and what can he know of the plots which he pretends to reveal?"

Nicanopé could make no reply to Robert's statements, and with a sullen gesture he commanded the feast to proceed, at the conclusion of which the Frenchmen betook themselves to their tents. When they retired, Robert posted a night guard, fearing treachery on the part of his hosts, but nothing occurred to interrupt their rest.

In the morning Robert stepped out into the cold bracing air, full of plans for the fort which he had determined to build here; but he was struck by the unusual quiet. Of the six guards whom he had posted not one remained. The tales they had just heard from Nicanopé proved the last straw to be laid upon their wavering loyalty; and they took this opportunity to desert, choosing the severities of the unbroken forest's snows rather than the terrors of the unknown monsters of the Mississippi. Nothing could have happened to dishearten Robert more than this, for he had picked his men at the start as those in whom he could impose implicit confidence. If these six would leave him, he could expect nothing better from those who now remained.

This episode, as was always the case when Robert Cavelier received an apparent set-back, resulted in a prompt and definite decision. He would proceed without a moment's delay to

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build his projected fort, thus removing the remaining members of his party from disaffecting influences, and placing him in a position to protect himself against possible treachery. He had already selected the site, half a league below the camp of the Illinois, on the southern bank of the river. After a stern address to his men and a farewell to his hosts, Robert led the party thither, and the fortifications were at once begun.

This was Fort Crêvecœur, the first civilised occupation of what is now the State of Illinois. The name "Fort Broken-heart" seems to indicate despair on the part of an explorer; but could one have seen the indefatigable energy with which he entered into this undertaking, he would realise that the agony of that name was merely reminiscent of the Netherlands. Taught by bitter experience that trust could be reposed in none but himself; fearful even of Tonty and the faithful Piskaret, who had never shown the slightest deviation in his blind hero-worship of his master; torn with anxiety regarding the safety of the "Griffon," upon whose arrival depended his financial standing in the colony; weakened by the desertion of a part of his men; borne down by the loss of the woman who formed the bright ideal which took him beyond the mere ambitions of

an adventurer, — Robert Cavelier stands out upon this bleak page of history with his face still looking toward his goal, and with firm conviction in his heart that the discovery of the great river waits for him and him alone.



CHAPTER XVII THE EXPLORER DISCOVERS A GREAT RIVER

AND

SATISFIES HIS AMBITION



HE FIRST OF MARCH came, and with it a conviction that another ship must

tion that another ship must be built in which to descend the Mississippi. To accomplish this, some one must return to Fort Frontenac to

secure anchors, cables, and rigging; and no one but Robert could undertake the journey. Five hundred leagues lay between him and the fort, to be covered on foot or in canoe through rivers and marshes harbouring five Indian nations besides the Iroquois, who had been driven to cover by Robert's expedition.

Each day's provisions were dependent upon the success of Piskaret's gun; the heroic travelers slept upon the ground, from which the frost and snow had not yet departed; loaded down with baggage and canoes, they climbed rocks, broke through thickets, and waded waistdeep in the chilling waters, their clothes freezing to their bodies as they proceeded. All

this and more was endured by Robert, Piskaret, and the four Frenchmen who volunteered to accompany him, — four trusty hearts who gladdened Robert by giving him the loyalty which he had hoped to find in all. Tonty remained behind with the other members of the party to garrison Fort Crêvecœur, uncertain whether treachery or fidelity would be his portion.

At St. Joseph Robert met La Chapelle and Leblanc, whom he had sent forward weeks before to discover some news of the "Griffon," but they had learned nothing, and he ordered them to continue their return to the fort, to reinforce Tonty. Heavy rains increased the suffering as his own party advanced; one by one the men fell sick, and delays were made necessary for their recovery; now they were tracked by hostile tribes who were evaded only by Robert's strategy, — but at length the little party arrived at Niagara. Here they found some traders who confirmed Robert's fears that the "Griffon" was lost, and also gave him the further intelligence that a ship from France, bound for Quebec and laden with stores belonging to his associates at Fort Frontenac, had been wrecked and lost with all on board. Truly Robert believed that Fate had taken up the curse of the Jesuits and was wreaking an awful vengeance!

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The men were too ill to proceed, so Robert left them at Niagara and pushed on alone. The worst of the journey was behind him; and on the sixth of May, sixty-five days after leaving Fort Crêvecœur, he stood before the familiar bastions of Fort Frontenac. La Forest met him at the gate, filled with consternation and surprise; but instead of leading him within the fort, he motioned him to follow outside the walls until they were safe from observation. Then he welcomed his chief with mingled joy and sorrow, telling Robert that he had been reported dead, and that the creditors of the Associates had seized the seigniory. La Forest was ready to aid him, but Robert's presence must not be known.

The faithful lieutenant provided a place in which Robert could safely await the preparations for the return, and went heartily to work getting together not only the materials required, but also forming another company to return with him. Robert inquired eagerly regarding the arrival of Anne and her father, but La Forest could tell him nothing. As the lieutenant had recently been in Quebec and had seen the Governor, Robert accepted the news as confirmation of his worst fears. Father Jean Cavelier had planned well when he took his unexpected guest to the Hôtel

Dieu, where her name was unknown except to him.

Three days after Robert's arrival two voyageurs came to Fort Frontenac with a letter
addressed to him from Tonty. Fortunately
this fell into the hands of La Forest, who delivered it to Robert and shared with him the
disconcerting news. As soon as Robert had left
Fort Crêvecœur nearly all of Tonty's men had
mutinied, destroying the fort and throwing into
the river all the arms and provisions which they
were unable to carry away. Later news came
to La Forest that these men had joined the
original deserters at Michilimackinac, and now,
twenty in number, were awaiting the opportunity to murder Robert upon his return, as
the surest way to escape punishment.

As La Forest's party was not yet ready to start, Robert decided to meet this situation at once; and with nine companions supplied by the lieutenant, he set out in canoes, intending to surprise his would-be assailants, and to remove them from the path of his return. After passing the Bay of Quinté Robert disembarked and awaited developments.

When morning broke, two canoes were seen approaching without suspicion, one far in advance of the other. As the first one drew near, Robert's party suddenly put off from shore, and

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with leveled guns commanded the deserters to surrender. So unexpected was the demand that they complied without a struggle, as did also those in the second canoe, which by this time had approached; but another canoe, which until now had not been noticed, was far enough in the rear to profit by the fate of the others.

After securing his prisoners Robert pursued the fugitives, overtaking them after they had landed and were attempting to make their escape by land. A brief but fierce fight took place on shore, during which two of the deserters were killed and the remaining three taken prisoners. These, with their companions, were delivered over to La Forest, who placed them in custody at the fort.

At length the new expedition, which later circumstances turned into a relief party for Tonty, was ready to set out, and at Robert's request La Forest went with it. A shorter route was taken, and they reached Michilimackinac by the river Humber, Lake Simcoe, the Severn, the Georgian Bay of Lake Huron, coasting the Manitoulin Islands. Impatient at the delay occasioned by the heavy stores, Robert left La Forest at this point to follow more slowly, while he himself advanced rapidly with twelve men, searching for evidences of

Tonty. [255]

Up the St. Joseph again, across to the Kankakee, down to the great town of the Illinois, past the Rock of St. Louis, Robert hastened on his quest. Just beyond this lay a plain which had recently been covered with Indian dwellings; now it formed a scene of desolation and death. Ashes alone remained to show where the habitations had stood, and human skulls grinned from the charred poles. Wolves and buzzards, disturbed by the approach of Robert's party, fled from their ghastly repast, and awaited at a distance an opportunity to resume. To Robert these were certain evidences of the work of the Iroquois; but what concerned him more was whether or not Tonty and his few remaining followers had been quartered here and thus included in the wholesale slaughter. Carefully he examined each skull, but to his infinite relief he found that no white man was among the victims.

Again the party pushed forward, — down the Illinois, past Peoria Lake to the site of Fort Crêvecœur, which they found, as reported, entirely destroyed by the deserters. Robert remained here only long enough to examine the destruction of his hopes, and then continued on his search. Now they stole cautiously past camps of the savage warriors who had so recently tasted blood that they thirsted for more;

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now they saw before them the half-burned bodies of women, still fastened to the torturestakes; but nowhere could be found any traces of Tonty and his men.

Still down the Illinois they paddled. At length its mouth was reached, and Robert's canoe floated upon the broad surface of the Mississippi. He forgot for the instant the seriousness of his present errand. The obstacles were behind him, and the path cleared to drift down upon this swift-flowing current to the realisation of his ambitions. But it was only for the instant. This was no time to indulge in personal ecstasy. Tonty's life might be hanging in the balance, and he alone could save it.

Turning back, he found a tree whose trunk projected far out over the water. This he stripped of its bark to make it more prominent, and fastened to it a board on which he drew figures of his party, sitting in their canoe, bearing a pipe of peace. He also fastened to it a letter for Tonty, telling him that he had returned to the deserted Indian village. Then, with never-ceasing paddles, they returned to the scene of desolation which they had so recently left behind them: back to the Kankakee and the St. Joseph, until the divided party was again united at Miami. Here Robert and La

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Forest worked out together the further plans for the search after the missing Tonty.

Robert little knew that he himself was the indirect cause of the disaster to Fort Crêvecœur. La Chapelle and Leblanc, whom he met at St. Joseph, promptly obeyed his orders and returned to Tonty. On their arrival they told their already dissatisfied comrades of the disasters which had befallen Robert's finances, and all were convinced that this meant his absolute ruin and the loss to them of their pay, which was already in arrears. Taking advantage of Tonty's absence on the following day, therefore, they destroyed the fort and its contents, leaving the message behind them for their returning commander to read, "Nous sommes tous sauvages!"

There remained nothing for Tonty to do except to send word to Robert of what had occurred, to retire to the Illinois village near by, and to await Robert's return. But he did not foresee how far out of Robert's path he was to be driven by the terrific onslaughts which the Iroquois were about to make upon their rival tribes. Unable to accomplish their desires upon the white settlements about Quebec because of Robert's prompt opposition, they turned their unsatisfied hungering for human prey into other channels. The Hurons, the Neutrals, the Eries, the Andastes, and the Algonquins had already

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felt their savage power, and their successes filled them with a desire to exterminate all within their reach. In this they received no little encouragement from the Dutch and English traders, who found in them an easy tool to use against their French rivals in the fur-trade.

The Illinois were the next in their path, and the Iroquois marked them for victims. Thus it was that Tonty and his few remaining men, not long after their arrival in the Illinois village, found themselves in the midst of a ferocious attack. Their Indian hosts accused them of being enemies and traitors, and of having inspired the Iroquois against them. Tonty realised his danger, and with characteristic boldness he cast aside his gun, and advanced unarmed to meet the approaching Iroquois hordes, holding out a belt of wampum. In a moment he was in their midst, but in spite of his attempt to make himself heard, he received a knife-stab which made him reel. Without heeding this, however, he pushed forward, and at last a chief, recognising him as a Frenchman, commanded a cessation of hostilities. Tonty declared that the Illinois were friends of the French and under the protection of the Great King, but this would hardly have accomplished the desired result had he not added that they were twelve hundred strong, reinforced by sixty Frenchmen.

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Having failed to catch the Illinois unawares, the Iroquois were willing to postpone the day of reckoning, and a truce was established. Tonty and his men were allowed to embark in a leaky canoe, and they attempted to ascend the river. They managed to keep afloat for a few days, but were finally obliged to abandon their effort, and to set out on foot for Lake Michigan, aiming for Green Bay. Tonty was taken ill and a delay necessitated, but at last their goal was reached. Some friendly Indians received them with welcome kindness, and provided for them in their village.

Here it was, five months later, that Robert at last found his devoted friend. Each supposed the other dead, and the reunion was so full of satisfaction that much of the suffering was forgotten. Tonty eagerly entered into Robert's newly-made plans to organise the roving tribes into a formidable force with which to oppose the Iroquois; but before undertaking this, both desired to complete the discovery of the Mississippi, which Robert had abandoned in the search for his friend.

This time Robert knew that his followers could be depended upon, for every man had been tried as by fire. Back to Michilimackinac they went, through the portage to Lake Simcoe, and on over the route which was now familiar.

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Miami and the Chicago River were behind them, and they were again upon the Illinois. Down this they floated, past the destroyed village, past barren forests and verdureless plains, until, on the sixth of February, Robert found himself again upon the Mississippi. The letter he had left for Tonty had been torn away by the elements, but the board, with the rough drawing upon it, still remained. Robert could afford to laugh at it as he pointed it out to Tonty, for a part of his quest at least had been successful.

Forward they pushed with glad hearts, past the mouth of the Missouri, which churned the clear waters into mud, gliding by a town of Tamaros and the mouth of the Ohio. The wintry air became warm as Spring as they reached the Arkansas' country, and warmer still as the great town of the Taensas was approached. Still farther down the river, and the Natchez village was before them, and two leagues below were the Coroas, Red River, the Dumas, and the Quinipissas. The town of Tangiboo lay behind them, and they approached their journey's end. Down, down, down they drifted, the clear, fresh water changing into brine as the sea came nearer; and at last the frail canoes ceased in their wanderings, resting tranquilly upon the great bosom of the Gulf itself.

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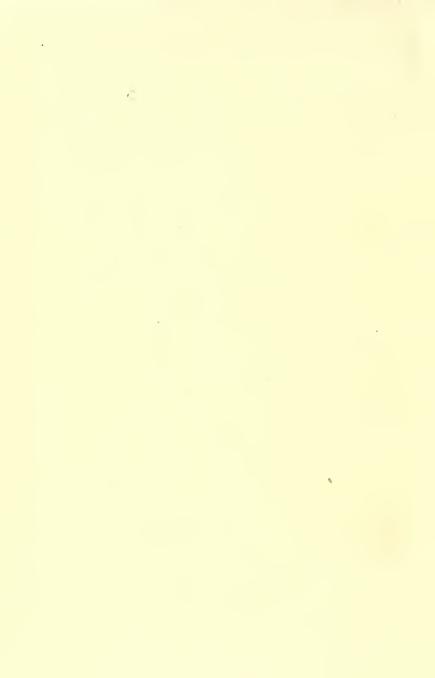
Robert and Tonty clasped hands in silence. At last, at last had come to him the realisation of his dreams. His sufferings, his privations, his dangers by day and his terrors by night, — all faded away into the supreme joy of that moment. He had kept his promise to his King, to himself, and to his beloved. Where was she now, from whom he most craved those words of praise and thanksgiving which he knew so well would be his?

The canoes are beached upon the shore, a little above the mouth of the river. The party disembarks and prepares a column, upon which are inscribed the words, "Louis le Grand, Roy de France et de Navarre, regne; le Neuvième Avril, 1682." The company is mustered under arms, the Te Deum is sung, and with a volley of musketry and loud shouts of "Vive le Roi" Robert raises the column. Every head is uncovered, and Robert proclaims in a firm voice:

"In the name of the most high, invincible, and victorious Prince, Louis the Great, by the grace of God King of France and of Navarre, Fourteenth of that name, I, this ninth day of April, one thousand six hundred and eighty-two, by virtue of the commission of His Majesty, do now take in the name of His Majesty and of his successors to the



"In the name of Louis the Great, I do now take possession of this great river of the Mississippi."



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Crown, possession of this great river of the Mississippi and its adjacent lands, hereby protesting against all who may hereafter undertake to invade, to the prejudice of the rights of His Majesty."



CHAPTER XVIII THE PRIEST THROWS OFF

HIS CASSOCK





HEN ANNE COURcelle threw her tired body upon the bed in the small room at the Hôtel Dieu, whither the sisters led her, she little thought how long a time would elapse before she

again went forth. The fatigue of the voyage, the disappointment at not finding Robert waiting to welcome her, and the excitement of her rude reception, all combined to bring on a relapse of the fever from which she had hardly recovered when she left Versailles.

The heart can sustain the body far beyond its own strength so long as hope buoys it up, but when that hope fades away, the body falls of its own weight, burying the heart beneath it. For weeks the girl lay there, again hovering between life and death, her mind wandering far beyond the narrow limits of her surroundings. She was back in Versailles once more, now with her father, now with the Princess

Palatine, now walking with Robert in the

park.

With noble effort the sisters fought for her life, and at last they won. With her convalescence Anne could but grow to love these great-hearted women, whose unselfish devotion touched her deeply. They had asked no questions, either of her or of Father Jean Cavelier, since the day he first brought her to them. She needed their services, and that was claim enough.

Where man and woman share the same labours, it is ever the woman who remains the truer to her faith. To man comes that inborn ambition which, stifle it as he will, always tempers his actions; to woman, the doing of the deed well is its own reward. Look where you will throughout the world's history of noble work, and you will find the woman's share but briefly written. The archives contain the name and record of nearly every martyr among the priests of the missions of New France, but naught save tradition recalls even the deeds of these heroic hospital nuns of Quebec.

There were no trained physicians in New France, and upon these women and their sisters in Montreal fell the burden of caring for the sick and the wounded. Hardly a ship arrived at Quebec from France without bringing with it some form of infectious disease.

Sometimes it was small-pox, sometimes it was leprosy,—it mattered not what: the sisters at the Hôtel Dieu accepted their responsibilities. They might die, but they never complained. Jogues, Lalemant, and Brébœuf and the others will live throughout the ages with their memory lighted by the glare of the stake, with each contortion carefully recorded, while these faithful nuns, whose courage and whose martyrdom were no less sublime, and whose work was freed from the dishonour of political and spiritual strife, sink into oblivion without even a record of their names.

When Anne was able to sit up for a few moments, the sisters moved her chair to the window, that her eyes might have new scenes to relieve the monotony. Again she gazed upon the broad surface of the St. Lawrence and the St. Charles, again she saw the treetops of the forests, again her eye stretched out toward the west, - and the memory of those other days, when she and Robert had stood together on the summit of the Rock, came back to her with a dull weight of pain. Just outside the window the sisters showed her the great tree beneath which, forty years before, Mother Marie of the Incarnation first instructed the Indian children in spiritual truths. Then her gaze returned to the narrow compass

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of the room, and her heart was filled with utter loneliness.

She was sitting thus one morning when the Mother Superior entered the room. Anne at once strove to banish her sadness, for this seemed a poor return for all the kindness she had received. She therefore greeted the mother with a weak little smile, and held out her hand affectionately.

"You are feeling better to-day, my daughter?"

queried the Mother Superior.

"Yes, mother; how could I do aught but gain when you all bestow upon me such love and care?"

"I rejoice indeed, my child, for we have been sore distressed about you. But I have come this morning to ask if you feel strong enough to receive a visitor. Father Cavelier is below, and desires to see you."

"Father Cavelier!" repeated Anne, a shadow crossing her face. She put her hand to her head, as if striving to recall some past thought which had escaped her. She had forgotten him entirely until now, yet it was he who had saved her from the humiliating marriage that seemed inevitable, and it was he who had brought her to this sanctuary. She must not be ungrateful, and yet—

The Mother Superior watched her closely, attributing her actions to her weakness.

"Father Cavelier?" Anne repeated the name

again, as if in question.

"Do you not remember him, my daughter? It was he who brought you to us; and not a day has passed without a visit from him to inquire regarding your condition."

"Yes; I recall him," Anne replied; "but I was trying to remember something else which has escaped me. He has been very kind to

me, and I shall be glad to see him."

"It is not necessary that you should do so unless you wish it," said the mother, kindly, somewhat mystified by the expression upon the girl's face.

"But I do wish to see him, mother," said Anne, quickly, quite ashamed of her hesitancy.

"Very well; I will call him."

Father Jean Cavelier did not delay after once receiving the Mother Superior's summons. He entered the room quietly, greeting Anne with many expressions of congratulation upon her convalescence. The girl could but be struck by the appearance of the priest beside her. His resemblance to Robert was strong in spite of the difference in their physique; and even the black cassock, which hung so closely about his almost emaciated body, could not dissipate it. His thin face was distinctly spiritual in its expression, and his

voice and words well fitted his ecclesiastical vocation.

"I have been waiting long for this moment, my sister," said Jean, suavely.

"I thank you, father; I fear I have been a great care to all of you. But, tell me, have

you heard aught of Robert?"

Jean had expected this question, and was fully prepared to answer it without hesitation. His campaign was carefully outlined in his mind, and a part of it was to encourage Anne in her devotion to his brother, while he studied her at his leisure.

"Not yet," he replied kindly; "but that does not necessarily warrant apprehension. My brother had no definite point to strike in his expedition, and the Iroquois are crafty foes."

"I trust that you are right, father!" said Anne, glad of any encouragement which might help to sustain her hope. "Here in this little chamber it is hard indeed to believe anything but the worst, and my heart so longs for relief from this overpowering dread."

The tears welled up in her eyes in spite of

her efforts to keep them back.

"Do not despair, my sister," replied Jean, taking her hand affectionately in his. "We must get you out of doors, where you will find more to relieve your mind from its forebod-

ings; and while waiting for Robert's return I beg of you to accept a brother's devotion and protection."

Anne looked at him steadily, as if she would read in his face a denial to her intuitive distrust, but Jean Cavelier was too consummate an actor to allow his motives to lie upon the surface, where they could be easily discovered. Anne feared to be unjust to him, yet a something prevented her from accepting his words without qualification. But he was the one to whom she ought naturally to turn, and she could find no tangible reason for her apprehensions.

"There is no one else in whom I can place my trust, father," said she at length, "unless I throw myself upon Governor Frontenac's friendship for Robert. That is what I should have

done, had not we met so unexpectedly."

This was the last thing which Jean Cavelier wished to have happen, and he hastened to oppose it. He could easily surmise what was in the girl's thoughts, and he realised that he must win her confidence or his entire plan would miscarry.

"Is it not enough, my sister, that Robert wished you to place yourself under my protection? Governor Frontenac, as you know, has no women in his household, and the chateau would hardly be the place for you to stay.

More than this, Robert felt that the old associations would not add to your happiness, were you to return as guest where once you had been the mistress."

"He was right," replied Anne, sadly. "I could not stand it. Every turn would remind me so of father. I could not stand it!"

"But here, with the sisters whom I judge you love, you are as safe as if Robert himself were beside you; and you are absolutely secluded from the outside world, which would be cruel in its curiosity concerning you."

"It is best, as you say, but this waiting is, oh, so hard!"

"I know it is, my sister; but if you will accept my friendship, and contain yourself in patience, I will try to help you pass the time as pleasantly and as swiftly as possible against the day of Robert's return, which must now be near at hand."

"There is naught else to do, is there?" answered Anne, with a faint smile. "You will have to accept me as a guest whether you will or no!"

"A sweet privilege, my sister," replied Jean, again holding her hand in taking his leave, — "a sweet privilege, which I am only too glad to have granted to me. And some day, before Robert's return, you will have forgotten the

distrust with which my brother's idle tales have filled you."

Without giving Anne an opportunity to reply, Jean left the room, well satisfied with his first interview. If the Iroquois could succeed in delaying Robert's return, he could ask no more. He had raised a doubt in Anne's mind as to her right to question his sincerity when everything seemed to support him in the position he had taken, and his attitude bespoke a brother's kindly interest. He had given her an unquestioned argument against seeking Frontenac, which he knew would avail far more because of the sentiment which was attached to it. And, finally, Anne was cloistered here among the sisters, unknown to all save him, where none but he could see her. All in all, Father Jean Cavelier had reason to congratulate himself upon the progress of his little affair thus far.

The weeks came and went, but news of Robert seemed as far away as ever. Jean continued to be hopeful, and Anne welcomed him day by day, if for no other pleasure than to hear some one say that her lover was alive and must soon return. The invalid was able to walk out in the garden now, and the sisters became accustomed to the sight of the sallow priest walking up and down the paths beside

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the girl, whose beauty returned to her little by little as her recovery became more complete.

But the sisters did not see, nor did Anne herself realise, what was taking place in Jean's heart. From boyhood the priest had possessed but one object in life, and that was self gratification. His parents had meant nothing to him; he had always hated his brother; and even in taking sacred orders he had thought much more of the personal glory which he felt sure would come to him than of the souls he might save for his Maker. He had scoffed at women, regarding them as puppets intended simply as instruments or hindrances to men in the carrying out of grand ideas. Even the self sacrificing sisters of the Hôtel Dieu meant to him no more than willing labourers in furthering the ambitions of the fathers, to whom came all the credit and all the power.

At last, however, Father Jean Cavelier experienced a sensation which was not at all ecclesiastical. This girl, whom he had intended to use as the instrument of his revenge upon his brother, had unconsciously succeeded in inspiring in his cold, selfish heart a feeling much akin to love. When the knowledge of this first came to Jean, he was himself genuinely surprised. Then he was pleased, for this idea opened up another channel which would bring

about the same result with infinitely greater pleasure to himself. He must needs renounce the cloth, to be sure, but he had never taken his clerical profession with sufficient seriousness to have this stand as an objection.

Even after his change of plans, however, Jean continued to encourage Anne in her belief that Robert would yet return. In his own mind he had come to the welcome conclusion that Fate or the Iroquois had freed him from his brother's presence for good and all; and this was the general opinion in the colony. Still, for the present it seemed wise to keep up the illusion while he ingratiated himself still further into Anne's confidence.

The weeks turned into months, and Anne was quite recovered from her illness. Waiting and suspense had become a habit by this time, but her faith was firm and unwavering. During her weakness she needed Jean's reassurances, but with returning strength came a conviction which required no support. Still, it was agreeable to have some one to talk with about Robert, and Jean's companionship was not unwelcome.

Safe now in the conviction that Robert would not return, Jean began to grow impatient at the constancy with which Anne awaited her absent lover. It was time for him to take the other side, and gradually to wean her from her

first love, that she might accept him in his brother's stead. On this afternoon, therefore, while walking with Anne in the garden of the Hôtel Dieu, he was less sanguine of Robert's safety than usual.

"What has changed your ideas, father?" asked Anne, anxiously. "Have you heard news

of which you have not spoken to me?"

"Nay, Anne, no news has come; but Robert's affairs have gone ill since he left Quebec. The seigniory of Fort Frontenac has been seized by his creditors."

"But what has that to do with his return?"

"This, that the creditors have held off, hoping for him to come back, but now they are convinced that he is dead, and they have seized his property to satisfy their claims."

"The cowards! They dared not wait!"

"They have already waited long, my sister; and were Robert here it would make little difference. A ship-load of goods purchased by Robert's associates was wrecked some weeks ago, and if Robert himself returns to-morrow, he will be arrested and imprisoned."

"What have you done to protect his hon-

our?" the girl asked.

"There has been and is nothing which I could do," Jean replied. "The sums involved are far too great for me to negotiate."

"But is it not strange, if Robert is really dead, that no tidings have ever come to Quebec? Oh, no! I'll not believe it! Robert is alive, and will return."

"He may be alive," answered the priest, carefully, "but he will not come back. News of the misfortune here would surely reach his ears, and he would not show himself in Quebec with the certainty of imprisonment staring him in the face."

"Would he not return for love of me?"

demanded the girl, warmly.

"Not so surely as he would remain away for love of liberty. Brother Robert is at home in the forests and would not welcome the restraint of four stone walls."

Anne was bewildered by the turn which the conversation had taken. Jean's attitude was that of a man who had much more to tell than he had yet divulged.

"You are keeping something from me, or else you are not speaking the truth," said Anne,

plainly, looking him squarely in the face.

"You should always keep yourself in a state of anger, Anne; it becomes you mightily," replied Jean, irrelevantly, but with undisguised admiration of the figure militant before him.

Anne stamped her foot indignantly.

"Is this the time for empty compliments?"

she cried. "Am I a child, that you should play me as a cat may play a mouse? Tell me all you have to say, or else have done and leave me to myself."

"There is but one thing more to say, and that I have kept from you, hoping that Robert would return, and that you might learn it from his lips instead of mine. "T is not a pleasant duty to perform."

"What is it? what is it?" begged Anne, beside herself with apprehension, and sinking upon a bench with a beseeching appeal in her

eyes.

Jean looked at her long and sadly before he

replied.

"I wish I might lessen the blow in some way," he said at last; "but it is less cruel now to speak the truth than to keep you in ignorance of it. My dear girl, Robert is not worthy of you."

"Is this the remarkable information which you have to convey after all this suspense?"

asked Anne, her voice full of indignation.

"Nay; listen. As I have already told you, before Robert set out upon this expedition we became reconciled, and he related to me what had been his experiences here and in France. Particularly did he speak of his plighted troth to you. Then he told me that since his return

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to Quebec his mind had changed, and that he had no heart for this marriage which he had planned. I upbraided him for his weakness, and he admitted his fault, but avowed himself determined to adhere to his later decision. Just before leaving Quebec he asked me to be on the watch for you and your father, and when you came to tell you in his name what he had told me, begging you to return upon the same ship. Of course he did not anticipate your father's death and your arrival by yourself, or perchance he would not have been so cruel."

Jean watched the girl carefully during his narrative, so that he might vary it to suit the occasion, but Anne's demeanour completely deceived him. She was absolutely quiet now, without a vestige of the anger which had before possessed her, and her face was deathly white. The priest therefore proceeded without hesitation.

"He further said that he should keep himself informed regarding you, and that if you failed to respect his wish that you return to France, he would not come back to Quebec. When I met you so unexpectedly the day of your arrival, I had not the heart to deliver the unkind message, at least until you overcame the fatigue of the voyage. And then came your illness, so the days and weeks went by,

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and I could not bring myself to tell you. Now, however, that your strength has fully returned, and you are wondering why Robert does not come back to you, I must speak the truth, cost me what it may. But you have already had your revenge upon him, Anne, for he has either perished among the savages or will return here as a dishonoured man. Again I say, Robert is not and never has been worthy of you."

"What right have you to say this to me?" asked Anne, in a low tone, too stunned to know

what she was saying.

"The right of a man who loves you, Anne," answered Jean, quickly. "Every moment I have been with you, these past months, has shown me what a treasure my brother has cast aside, and has made me eager to claim it as my own. I love you, Anne, with an affection which has never before been given to any but to my Maker."

Anne was on her feet now, her eyes flashing forth the hidden fires of indignation and scorn

which lay beneath.

"You love me!" she cried, — "you, a priest, dare to insult me and your Order in the same breath! You — oh! I needed this last outrage to make my misery complete!"

"Stop, Anne! you shall not revile me!"

replied Jean, fiercely. "Do you think that because my heart is enshrouded by this cassock, it ceases to beat? Do you think a priest an image of clay, without human sensibilities or human passions? I grant you that these feelings and the tenets of the Church are mutually opposed, but I gladly sacrifice the one that I may indulge the other. It is not the priest who offers himself to you; it is the man!"

Anne's contempt and humiliation had steadily increased while Jean was speaking, and by the time he finished she was wrought up almost

to a frenzy.

"It is the man, say you, Jean Cavelier? Let me tell you, sir, that, little as there is of the priest concealed beneath those vestments of the Church, there is yet less of manly attributes. Love you? I could as easily love a reptile or a viper as you, with your false tongue and traitorous heart. Get you gone, sir, and remember that I believe that Robert lives, and that he will return to answer this insult which you have offered to him and to the woman he loves. Go, and spare me the further humiliation of realising that I have allowed you to be with me day after day while you have been planning out your cowardly plot. Get you gone, sir, I say, and that quickly!"

Jean Cavelier did not admire Anne's anger

so unreservedly as he had done half an hour before. His last interview with Robert contained for him what he had believed to be the climax of chagrin; but this angry girl, strong in her insulted womanhood, represented even a deeper degree of mortification.

"Yes, I will go," he muttered rather than replied, "I will go; but this is not the end. You are absolutely in my power, and Jean Cavelier, even though you despise him, is not

a man to be so lightly dealt with!"

Anne did not answer, but turning toward the hospital she walked with unsteady step to her room, where she fastened the door and threw herself upon the bed, convulsed in an agony of tears.

"Robert,—oh, my Robert!" she sobbed, "where are you now? Have I not endured enough without having this indignity heaped upon me? Oh, Robert, come back to me!"

The sun set, and twilight deepened into dusk. The stars came blinking out in the dark heaven. Quiet settled over all. Slowly Anne roused herself from her stupor and threw aside the shutter of the window, refreshed by the cool air which rushed upon her. Steadily she gazed out into the darkness. Through the solemn stillness there came to her a voice out of the past. She seemed to see a strong man's figure before

her, whose devotion rang out full and clear with every word:

"May I not think that far away — perhaps watching the same star — you too are thinking

of me, and wishing for my safe return?"

"Oh, Robert!" Anne stretched out her arms toward that distant star, — "oh, Robert, I am thinking of you, dear; and God knows that I wish for your safe return!"



CHAPTER XIX THE SAVAGES FOIL:A GREATER: SAVAGE





ondition which now came over the daily routine of her life, Anne was forced to plan some change in her surroundings; and her thoughts naturally turned to Frontenac.

Being with the sisters she was undoubtedly safe from further persecution, in spite of Jean's threat, but in a measure she seemed to be accepting his hospitality, since it was he who had brought her to this present home. She could endure this thought only with horror, and she hastened to send word to the Governor regarding her identity, beseeching his advice and protection. But even here she was again doomed to disappointment, for Frontenac was absent in Montreal making a tour of the colony, and weeks must elapse before his return.

Anne therefore had only the inevitable to accept, and she begged the Mother Superior to allow her to become one of them while she

remained in their midst. No questions were asked concerning the abrupt termination of Father Cavelier's daily calls. Being women, they undoubtedly wondered at it; being sisters of the Hôtel Dieu, they appeared not to notice it. Anne had appealed to them no less than they themselves had won a place in her heart; and they gladly welcomed the addition to their numbers.

So it was that Mademoiselle de Courcelle, maid of honour to the Princess Palatine in the Old World, became Sister Anne of the Hôtel Dieu in the New; and as time wore on, she found herself much happier in her new position than she had ever been at Versailles. The companionship of those quiet, devoted women taught her supreme confidence that her waiting would not be in vain, and her daily duties relieved the weary strain upon her. To and from the sick and the dying she passed, finding relief in the fellowship of suffering, and in the opportunity of helping others to bear it more easily. Frequently in her work she met Father Cavelier, but no one would have known that he was not an utter stranger to her. She had placed herself even farther from him than if she had taken shelter in the Governor's chateau, for she was constantly engaged in her work, and thus rarely alone.

FOILED BY THE SAVAGES

But Jean Cavelier had not forgotten his humiliation. Anne represented the only object whom, during his whole life, he had even thought he loved; and when the veil was torn aside so suddenly, and he saw the disgust and loathing with which the girl regarded him, his heart received a blow for the first time. This heightened the resentment Jean felt toward Anne because of his injured pride and self-esteem; and he pondered long over the next step to be taken. Robert had passed beyond his reach, and he therefore had a double revenge to visit upon the head of the unsuspecting girl. Jesuit companions were quite content that their antagonist had removed himself from their path; but Jean would have been better pleased to be the instrument of his misfortunes, and to witness his suffering while enduring the torture.

The bearing of Father Cavelier, however, during this trying interval was perfection itself; and even Anne was deceived. They met, sometimes daily, always as priest and nun, — he labouring with the penitent for his soul, she with the patient for his life. Jean could but admire the self-control and unselfishness of the girl as he met her thus; Anne, however, could not reconcile Jean's apparent sincerity in his religious work with the episode in the garden of the Hôtel Dieu, which she could not efface from

her memory, try as she would. It was a strange little drama being enacted, day by day, but the man still held the leading rôle. In spite of her experiences, Anne could only believe that Jean's outburst was due to momentary impulsiveness, and that he himself probably deeply regretted it. Since he made no effort to force himself upon her further, it was easier for her to be generous.

Anne was happy now, but her work never drove from her heart the knowledge that she was waiting for a realisation of her hopes. Each day must bring nearer the time when Robert would return to her. Still, no matter how firmly one holds a belief, when the moment of realisation finally comes, it is ever in the nature of a surprise. She gave a sudden start, therefore, when she went out from the Hôtel Dieu one morning, and found a rough-appearing soldier waiting to speak with her in the garden.

"You wished to see me?" she asked, giving no evidence of the excitement under which she laboured.

"Yes, mistress; I bring you a message, which must be delivered in private."

The man motioned mysteriously toward the farther end of the garden, and moved slowly away in that direction. Anne followed him as in a dream. At last her long vigil was to end,

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and her patience was to receive its reward! She could feel this intuitively. No word was spoken until the farther limits of the garden were reached.

"You have come to me with a message from Master Cavelier?" Anne could endure the suspense no longer.

"Yes, mistress; he is even now just beyond the bastion of Fort Frontenac, and he would that you should some to him at once"

that you should come to him at once."

"So far away! But why does he not come to Quebec?"

"He cannot, mistress —"

"Because of his creditors, do you mean?"

"Partly because of them, and partly because he has been wounded."

"Wounded! Robert wounded! How can I get to him?"

"My canoe, in which I came, is at your service, mistress."

"But 't is a long journey to Fort Frontenac."

"T is true, mistress; but there is no way to reach Master Cavelier other than to trust yourself to me."

Anne knew not what to think. Fort Frontenac was a hundred and twenty leagues away, yet if Robert lay there wounded, delay might prove fatal to him. As it was, the time necessary for the journey would prove irksome

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enough. Yet the thought of so long a time in the company of this man alone, whose very appearance was disquieting, filled her with alarm. All this and more passed rapidly through her mind as she stood there; then she answered him firmly, with determination in her voice:

"I will go with you. Await me half an hour, and we will undertake the journey. I

may trust you?"

The man nodded assent, and Anne hastened to the Hôtel Dieu to gather together what few things she might need during her absence, and some medicines for use with Robert. In less than the time appointed she returned to the garden, and a few moments later the canoe started upon its journey, with its bow pointed toward Montreal.

Anne had made her decision and accepted the situation hastily, but now there was no turning back. As she sat in the canoe facing the man paddling in the stern, she found ample opportunity to study him. His face was not a hard one, after all, though unquestionably weak. He was roughly clad, but this was natural enough after all these months of forest life. And he had been with Robert! That was a sufficient claim upon her confidence. Surely her lover would send no one to her in whom he himself did not have perfect trust.

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"Is Master Cavelier sorely wounded?" she asked at length, breaking the silence.

"Yes, mistress; but not mortally, if he receive

prompt care."

"How came he to this spot you mention?"

"His men bore him thither on a litter."

"You are one of his men?"

"Yes, mistress; I have been with him ever since he left Quebec."

"What has so delayed him in his return?"

"First of all, the Iroquois led him far into the forest, and in returning he passed through many disasters, until we feared never to see Quebec again."

"Has he been ill long?"

Anne's questions came fast, as she strove to understand the situation.

"A month and over, mistress; 't is an old wound, received many months ago. A few weeks since it broke out afresh, and has near carried him off."

Anne relapsed into silence. Anxiety replaced the excitement, and she feared Robert might be more seriously ill than the messenger would admit. Surely, after all these years, had his strength permitted, he would have sent her some written word or token.

The days passed uneventfully. Anne's guide proved courteous and respectful, and answered

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her questions in so straightforward a manner that her doubts vanished, and she forgot everything except that each moment took her nearer to her lover.

At last, after thirty weary days, the stone bastions of Fort Frontenac loomed up before them, and Anne's heart gave a great leap of joy. Yet what might not have occurred during the time which had elapsed since the messenger left Robert's side!

"Is he in the fort?" asked Anne.

"Nay; just beyond, in a shelter which his men built before he went away."

They beached the canoe just below the fort, and continued on foot until the stone walls behind them faded from their sight, out beyond the clearing, into the light underbrush that had been left in felling the great trees which had been required in the construction of the fort. At last a small hut became visible, evidently built to shelter the woodsmen when heavy rain or snow overtook them at their work, but long unused since the completion of the fort.

"He is in there," said the man, pointing it out to Anne, and coming to a standstill.

"Are you not going there with me?" asked Anne, unable to free her mind from its earlier apprehensions.

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"Nay, mistress; my orders are to allow you to enter there alone."

The girl hesitated a moment and then started forward, for the agony of suspense was harder to endure than the momentary suspicions, while the messenger disappeared in the woods. The short distance which remained was soon covered, and Anne paused before the half-open door, her hand upon her bursting heart. Then she pushed the door open and quietly entered.

"Robert, - oh, Robert!" she called softly.

The door closed behind her, and the heavy bar fell into place. Anne started apprehensively.

"Good-morning, Mistress Anne!"

It was the suave voice of Jean Cavelier which addressed her.

"What does this mean? Where is Robert?"

gasped Anne, her voice almost failing her.

"Where is Robert, ask you, fair mistress? Surely I am not my brother's keeper. And what does this mean? Your face tells me that you have already answered that question for yourself. You have fallen very gracefully into the trap, and it is my turn now. I trust your journey from Quebec was not too great an effort?"

"You coward!" Anne's voice had returned to her, but she drew back, leaning against the

wooden logs of the hut, grateful for the support

they gave her.

"Have your say, sweetheart," replied Jean, tauntingly; "it will avail you naught. I have a score to pay which has waited long for settlement, but now I feel secure that payment will be made. Your precious Robert has seen fit, on every possible occasion, to insult and revile me; and you yourself, with that same fair mouth which I shall soon cover with caresses, have scorned the honest love which I offered to you. It is my turn now, Anne, and here where no living soul can come to interrupt our exchange of mutual devotion, I intend to make the most of it."

Anne shuddered and tried to draw back still farther from him; but Jean made no attempt

to approach her.

"Before you tell me of your affection," he continued insultingly, "I have something else to say to you, and you shall hear it now. My brother Robert has been a thorn in my flesh ever since he was a child. Our mother gave to him, while she lived, a love which was never once bestowed on me. Our father, had I not offset it with imagined tales of Robert's misconduct, would have cast me off in Robert's favour. When once I succeeded in placing him in the House of the Novices at Paris, however,

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I had no further fears, as I supposed that he was buried forever. By a humiliating trick, however, the boy escaped the snare which had been set for him, and disappeared I knew not where. I sought him long but unavailingly, until at length, quite by accident, I found him at Quebec, grown to man's estate and holding an important position in the colony. The child whom I had sought to remove from the path of mine own ambitions had outstripped me in the race!

"Then he went to France, and I sent messages to Paris which should have brought about his ruin. Why they did not, the Devil alone knows; but he returned loaded with honours and privileges, assuming a still higher post at Quebec. He seemed a favourite of the fates, while I, in whom ambition is stronger than the love of life itself, plodded along in the same monotonous paths which lead not to that glory which I believed would come."

Anne was interested in spite of her fear. The priest's words explained much that had not been understood either by Robert or herself. But Jean had not yet reached the end of his narrative.

"Then he was sent against the Indians, which meant the ruin of his seigniory. This was the first sign I perceived that his star might

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be dimmed. Then his return was delayed, and his death became assured. This placed you in my power, and at last I saw the opportunity to gratify my lifelong desire for revenge upon him who had so incurred my hatred. You were to be sacrificed to gratify that desire.

"And then, fool that I was, I grew to love For the first time in my life I felt an affection for some one other than myself, and so great was my devotion that I was willing to sacrifice my chosen calling to it. But you scorned that love, and reviled me even as Robert had done. This was the last straw, Anne, and you yourself are responsible for the result. I am a priest, but my heart beats as strong as Robert's, and the same hot blood runs in our veins. The memory of your face that day, and the contempt and disgust which I saw written upon it, will never leave me; but now I mean to have my satisfaction. You shall love me now, Anne Courcelle, whether you will or no. You may have one choice. I know that you will keep a promise. Tell me that you will be my wife, or, by Heaven, I will have you without the Church! Which shall it be?"

Anne gazed at him long without replying. She realised his power, and that all hope of escape was vain. Jean took a step toward her, but she held up her hand commandingly.

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"Stop, Jean Cavelier, — stop where you are! You have planned well, and your cunning does you credit. I am in your power, as you say, and I can quite understand that one who in the past has regarded not the ties of son or brother, and who has disgraced the cloth he wears, will not hesitate to take advantage of my helplessness. Your narrative needs but this ending to make it complete in its cowardice and degradation. You ask my answer? It is this. My heart belongs to that brother whose relationship you profane; my soul belongs to God. These two are beyond your reach. My body will be in your power after life has left it,—not before. I despise you; I loathe you. I marvel that so miserable a creature can bear semblance to a man!"

Anne was leaning against the hut no longer, but stood erect and strong, facing Jean with fearless eye, contempt and scorn expressed in every feature. Jean hesitated but a moment, and then crossed to her side, where he quickly pinioned her arms with his stronger ones, and covered her face with kisses.

"So be it, my beloved," he cried coarsely; "I accept your answer and yourself, even without the affection which I once hoped might be mine. Are my caresses less sweet than Rob-

ert's? Does it not seem good again to feel a man's strong arms about you?"

Anne struggled in vain. The priest's grip was like iron.

"O Robert! O God!" cried the girl, in desperation, "to you, my beloved on earth and in Heaven, I commend myself!"

Back and forth in the restricted space the girl struggled as for her life, striving to escape Jean's hateful caresses. As the two came in front of the small window of the hut, Jean uttered a cry, and suddenly released his victim from his grasp. Amazed by this unexpected respite, Anne was surprised to see the priest gazing stealthily out into the forest with a look of horror upon his face. Instinctively she rushed to the door and tried to lift the heavy bar which held it, little caring what had caused the interruption so long as she was freed from Jean's grasp. Before she succeeded, however, the priest pushed her aside; but she could see that he had no further thought of her.

"Fool!" he cried; "do you court instant death for us both?"

"Death?" Anne repeated mechanically.

"Yes, death! Did you not see those Iroquois steal past in the woods? They are in war-dress, and that means an attack on the

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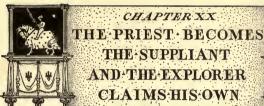
settlement. My God! we are trapped! We shall be caught between the savages and the settlers! What shall we do?"

Anne looked at Jean in disgust, seeing the expression of abject fear which settled upon his ashen face. She had nothing to dread from him now. His teeth chattered, and she could see his knees tremble beneath his cassock. The girl took a hasty survey of the situation from the window. Another band of Indians came into sight, and she watched them as they quietly stole by into the forest in the direction of Montreal. Then she turned again to the pitiable object behind her.

"A coward indeed!" she said, rather of him than to him. "There is but one thing to do, and that is to reach Fort Frontenac before we are discovered, and give the alarm. This is evidently the advance of the attack, and they are planning to surround the fort. Quick, we have not a moment to lose!"

Noiselessly the door was opened, and after making sure that there were no Indians in sight, Anne started for the fort. Jean followed behind her for a little distance, and then without a word broke into a run which soon left her far behind. Even in this desperate plight Anne could not resist the impulse to smile at the

sight of the frightened priest scurrying along with his thin legs, his cassock gathered up about his waist. A few moments before she had stood in deadly peril from him; now he was harmless enough!





OTH JEAN AND
Anne reached the fort without being observed, and as
soon as La Forest learned
the identity of his unexpected visitors, he welcomed
them gladly. There was

little time for conversation, as La Forest knew what this threatened attack would mean, unprepared and ill-garrisoned as the settlement was. He at once accepted Anne's conclusion that the savages had selected the fort as the first object of their attack, and he hastened to make what preparations he could for the defence. This done, he returned to the living-room, where he had left Anne and Father Cavelier.

The priest was still at the window, gazing across the clearing, and watching for further evidences of the dreaded foe. He had but slightly recovered from his fright; his face was still deathly pale, and his hands twitched con-

vulsively. Anne was sitting in one of the rude chairs, too exhausted to do more than think, but too happy in her escape from Jean to realise fully the seriousness of the new danger which was upon them. She greeted La Forest with a faint smile when he entered, and Robert's lieutenant at once drew up a chair beside her.

"I would that you had been here three years since, Mistress Courcelle, when Master Cavelier was present for a few days, seeking news of

you."

"Robert was here!" exclaimed Anne, her cheeks aglow and her fatigue forgotten. "Then

he is alive and will return to me!"

"He was alive, and I trust he is now. Surely no harder experiences can have come to him than he had already passed through at that time. Robert Cavelier knows no obstacles, mistress, and naught but death itself can keep him from coming back to you."

"I thank you for those words," replied Anne, her voice choking. "I have believed it ever, but until now I have received no sympathy in

my conviction."

"I trust that I may be able to preserve you against the time of his return," said La Forest, seriously, his thoughts again turning upon the Indians. "We are weakly garrisoned here, and from what you tell me I judge that the

Iroquois will make a determined effort to destroy the fort."

"Why do we hear nothing from them?"

inquired Anne.

"In all probability they will wait until tonight, so that they may come upon us without being observed. They will expect to catch us unawares, but your timely warning is a point in our favour."

The frugal supper was served as soon as dusk began to fall, and then each member of the household was posted on guard. Just before La Forest left Anne to take his position on the south bastion, he approached her for a last word, holding out to her a pistol which he drew from his belt.

"What is this for?" she asked.

"Mistress Courcelle," answered La Forest, solemnly, "I am doing what I think Robert Cavelier would wish me to do. Keep that pistol near at hand, and if the worst comes, do not let yourself be taken alive. You understand? Good-bye!"

"I understand," said Anne, taking the outstretched hand gratefully, "and I thank you."

The threatening storm broke soon after dark, and the thunder and lightning added to the discomfort of the men on guard. The rain came down in torrents, and special precautions were necessary to keep the powder from becoming

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useless. Hour after hour passed by with no signs of the savages. At length, however, in a flash of lightning, a guard upon the north bastion discovered the forms of the Indians creeping stealthily up to the walls, and the alarm was given.

La Forest at once massed his men on the north, leaving only enough to guard against a counter attack from the other directions. Quickly the cannon was swung into place, and the men stood with muskets primed awaiting the crisis. It was grim waiting in that darkness, knowing that the Iroquois, with all their cunning, were upon them, yet being unable to see even a sign of the presence of the foe.

"Are you sure that you saw them, Ragenneau?" asked La Forest.

The answer was given by a fiendish yell, which came with a suddenness that chilled the blood even of the most hardened soldier. The Indians had massed, and were attempting to rush the stockade, just beyond the wall.

"Quick! touch the light!" commanded La Forest, aiming the cannon in the direction from which the noise came; and by the cries which answered the discharge he knew that the first shot had done its work well.

Silence followed this sudden outburst, and the garrison eagerly awaited the next move on

the part of the Indians. The rain had ceased, and the wind was rising.

"Thank God for that!" said La Forest to the soldier next him; "there is a full moon tonight, and this wind will blow away the clouds so that we may watch these devils at their work."

A musket-shot from the south bastion announced that the scene of battle had been shifted, and the lieutenant quickly transferred most of his force to the new point of attack. A slight blaze in the near distance attracted La Forest's attention.

"They have set fire to the grange," he said, well satisfied; "we shall not need to wait for the moon."

The firing was intermittent, and the Indians seemed to be planning some new method of attack. Soon, however, the grange broke into flames, and in the glare the fiendish crew could be clearly seen, looking like demons, with their faces daubed and smeared with brilliant colours, their scalp-locks streaming in the wind, and their muskets and tomahawks waving wildly in the air.

Suddenly a cry was heard upon the north bastion, which the soldiers had just deserted, and again the fierce yell was heard.

"This is only a ruse; the attack is on the

south," cried La Forest, hastening back amid a fusillade of bullets coming in both directions.

It was as the lieutenant surmised. The main body of the Iroquois remained in their original position, but they had sent a portion of their force to the south, and had set fire to the grange in order to divert the garrison from

their real purpose.

By the time La Forest regained his position, six of his men had fallen and the stockade itself was carried by the savages. The hideous forms were directly beneath the walls now, and they were placing ladders, which they found outside, against the bastion. It was hand-to-hand fighting at unequal odds, but the soldiers withstood the attack with the desperation which the knowledge that no mercy will be given always brings. The Indians were suffering heavy losses, but the proportion was against the defenders. Perhaps fifty of the five hundred Indians had fallen; out of the twenty-eight men at the fort twelve were dead or too badly wounded to be of further service.

On they fought, with clubbed muskets now that there was no time to reload; but still the Indians advanced. La Forest saw that it meant a complete massacre to hold the position

longer.

"Back, men, to the house!" he cried; and

together they fought their way to the heavy door, which was opened to receive them and then quickly closed and barred. Here they could get a temporary respite.

"How many of us are left?" asked La Forest, glancing around him. Ten only remained.

While the battle was waging outside, Anne anxiously awaited news of the conflict, remaining in the living-room where La Forest had left her. Jean had disappeared, and she was alone. As the firing came nearer and nearer, she knew that the Indians were gaining the upper hand; but she was unprepared for the sudden return to the house, and at first supposed that the savages had gained an entrance. Firmly grasping the pistol which La Forest had given her, she drew back against the wall, awaiting developments. Suddenly the door was flung open, and La Forest entered the room.

"Ah! I am glad that naught has befallen you," she exclaimed, running toward him.

"It is going badly," he answered gloomily.

"The devils have forced the stockade and driven us to cover."

"How long can we hold out here?"

"Perhaps an hour; not longer. To think that you should have come to me for protection, and that I am unable to save you for himwhom I love better than life itself!"

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Anne placed her hand upon his shoulder.

"You have done — you are doing all in your power for him," she said quietly, "and I thank you for it in his name as well as in my own."

La Forest took her hand in his, powderstained as it was, and raised it to his lips.

"If it must be so, I will die beside you. I have always hoped that the opportunity might come when I could give my life for his, but perhaps it will serve him better if I place it at the service of the woman he loves."

In the meanwhile the savages were trying various expedients to gain an entrance to the house. The stone walls were impenetrable, but they attempted to force the doors and the windows, and burning fagots were thrown upon the roof. Suddenly a volley of musketry sounded above the noise of the battering-rams.

"What was that?" cried La Forest, springing to his feet. "Have the men gone out

again, against my orders?"

He rushed into the next room, where the survivors were gathered together, as astonished as himself at the unexpected sound. The battering ceased, and the yells of the Indians came clearly through the walls. Another sound of musketry, and the savages could be heard in hasty retreat.

"It is the Carignan regiment from Montreal!"

cried La Forest, joyfully, while the men hugged each other in delirious excitement over the unexpected relief.

"Thank God, thank God!" murmured La Forest, rushing to the door, and throwing it wide

open to welcome his saviours.

The little company was seen approaching, and La Forest hastened forward to greet its leader, who was in advance of his men. The light of the torch fell full upon his face.

"La Forest!"

"Robert Cavelier!"

The voices rang out loud and clear as the two men grasped each other's hands, while the rest of the survivors gathered around them.

"You have timed your return well, Master Cavelier. Not only do we rejoice over your own safety, but you have rescued us from destruction."

A rustle of skirts was heard behind them, and a woman's figure glided by, straight to Robert's arms.

"Robert, my Robert! I knew that you would come back to me!"

"Anne, my beloved!—here at Fort Frontenac? Can I believe my senses!—After all these years,—my beloved, my beloved!"

The others drew away from Robert and Anne, [307]

recognising the meaning of this reunion. As they did so some one tried to rush by them, but La Forest's strong arm threw him back, and he fell in a heap at Robert's feet.

"Who is this?" asked Robert, peering at the figure on the ground. Anne answered the

question.

"It is your brother, Robert, who decoyed me here to force me to marry him. He probably did not care to face you after all he has said and done."

Robert raised the priest to his feet and held him at arm's length. The pent-up fury of a lifetime struggled to escape, and Jean knew well what that look in his brother's eyes meant for him.

"I am going to kill you, Jean, do you understand?" said Robert, in a measured tone, the more fearful because of its forced restraint; "I am going to silence your lying tongue and carking voice forever. If you remember how to pray, make your peace with God!"

He flung the wretched figure to the ground, and deliberately drew his pistol from his belt, glancing at its priming. Jean, his face distorted with fear, dragged himself to his brother's feet and knelt before him, holding out beseeching hands.

"Robert — my brother — spare my life, I pray you! For the sake of our mother, who bore us both, for the sake of God, and as you yourself hope for forgiveness, do not murder me!"

"T will be no murder, wretch; 't will be an execution. I care not for your prayers. going to kill you, - now!"

"Robert!"

It was Anne who spoke. She was very pale as she stood there in the moonlight, with her hand on Robert's pistol.

"Robert, however much this man may have sinned against you, his conduct toward me has been much more grievous. Yet I ask you, for my sake, to spare his life. Let him go whither he will, and let not our happiness be stained by his blood. Will you do this for my sake?"

Robert looked long at the groveling figure before him, and then turned to Anne.

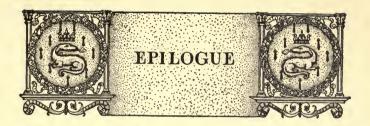
"For your sake?" He repeated her words. slowly after her, -- "for your sake? Yes; for

your sake I would do anything!"

Robert folded Anne in his arms, and together they watched Jean Cavelier steal off into the night. Anne felt the load lifted from her heart, and she looked up into Robert's face with a

smile of contentment which seemed to turn the night into day.

Perhaps it was well that it was the moon which was shining upon the realisation of their hopes. The sunlight would have been too bright a glare after the long darkness.



HE SECRETS OF THE

primeval forest had been unfolded, and the Great West had passed from the unknown to the known. The banner of France floated proudly in the air where the Sieur de

La Salle had planted it at the mouth of the Mississippi until plucked down by some roving band of Indians, who feared not that the stern hand of Louis the Grand would reach out into the wilderness to rebuke their sacrilege. The explorer's self-imposed task was brought to a successful completion, and those eyes, whose longing to gaze upon the mythical waters had been gratified, were now content to look with even greater satisfaction into the face of the fair maiden before him. Happiness, greatest of blessings, contentment, serene and unalloyed, entered into the hearts of both. The sacrifice was ended, and the reward was great.

Could the curtain which veils the future have been drawn aside at that moment would it have destroyed all the joy that the present contained? Could those eyes, which were fastened each on the dear object before it, have peered through the mist, they would have seen the vain struggle of the Jesuits against the power of the Iroquois, who all unknowingly were the instruments of Liberty and Enlightenment against Error and Absolutism. They would have seen the recall of Frontenac, which sounded the knell of the hope of France to hold the New World against the growing strength of England. They would have seen the noble labours and fearless sacrifices of these untiring ecclesiastical pioneers come to naught because of the ignorance and bigotry and fanaticism which held in check and overpowered those finer qualities which later accomplished so much of good in other fields. They would have seen, after five short years of perfect happiness, assassination for one of the two standing in the moonlight, and for the other a life's devotion among the sisters of the Hôtel Dieu at Quebec.

No one can doubt that such prescience would have been accompanied by a broadness of nature which would have rejoiced at personal effacement in the knowledge that his work had

EPILOGUE

contributed toward the grandeur of the final result. Such a character as that of Robert Cavelier de La Salle belongs not to any time or age, but takes its place among those most cherished in the hearts of men.









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